

Jaycee Trust Travelling Fellowship Report

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30th November 2018

I was a recipient of the Jaycee Trust Travelling Fellowship in 2018. As part of my PhD, this funding allowed me to travel to England and spend four months with my co-supervisor Professor Philip Stern at the University of Exeter analysing doctors' prescription behaviour. During my time at the University of Exeter I learnt new analysis skills, experienced a new environment and extended my professional network. I would like to sincerely thank the Jaycee Trust Traveling fellowship selection committee and the donators that made this opportunity possible.

The following report includes information on my past background, PhD topic and my visit to the University of Exeter.

My Background

I was born and bred in Palmerston North, attending primary and secondary schools (CSNS, PNINS, and PNBHS) in the region before progressing onto studying a Bachelor of Business Studies majoring in Marketing and Finance at Massey University. Following my undergraduate degree, I completed a Master of Business Studies (Marketing) at Massey University while gaining work experience for Consumer Insights Ltd., a spin-out market research company of Massey Ventures Ltd. who employ and train top postgraduate. I have thoroughly enjoyed my experiences conducting academic and commercial market research. This led me to undertake a PhD at Massey University, which involved me spending four months at the University of Exeter with my overseas supervisor Professor Philip Stern.



My PhD Topic

My PhD research aims to investigate the information processing and purchase behaviour of older consumers in comparison to younger consumers. This is a particularly important issue given the ageing population globally.

The first of my studies, for which I received the Jaycee Trust Travelling Fellowship, involves longitudinal analysis of doctors' prescription data collected in the United Kingdom to determine whether prescription choices change as UK doctor's age. A major contribution of this study is that it will inform policy decisions regarding the care of patients, including older patients, by understanding the factors that drive age related prescription patterns.

My Visit to the University of Exeter

The Jaycee Trust Travelling Fellowship allowed me to spend four months studying at the University of Exeter under the guidance of my co-supervisor Professor Philip Stern. On arrival in Exeter, I was immediately made to feel welcome by Professor Stern and fellow staff members and students within the Business School.

I was set up with office space in the Business School and Professor Stern provided me with the panel data I would be using to analyse the prescription behaviour. I was immediately overwhelmed by the size of the data-set. The panel data included over 2.7 million new or switch prescriptions by 1,500 UK doctors over a 23 year period. I realised how lucky I was to have such a unique data-set as it is very uncommon to be able to access large longitudinal data-sets of this nature.

I spent the first few weeks adjusting to life in Exeter and getting a good understanding of the prescription data. Compared to the data-sets I have analysed academically or commercially, the prescription data was significantly larger and more complex. I was fortunate enough to have Professor Stern supervising me as he is an expert in prescription behaviour and has published numerous journal articles using this prescription data.



Over the next few months I spent a lot of time analysing and re-analysing the data. I originally had underestimated the time it would take to analyse a data-set of this size. However, regular meetings with Professor Stern allowed me to learn new techniques and methods for analysing the data and ensured I stayed on-track and the analysis was always moving forward.

Since, completing my four months at the University of Exeter I have returned to Massey University where I am in the process of writing up the results of the study into an academic journal article.

Benefits of the trip

During my time at the University of Exeter I developed new analysis skills that have given me the ability to work with large, complex data-sets. I have already noticed the benefits these new skills are having on my work and it has also given me the ability to help the development of other post-graduate students that I help train within Consumer Insights Ltd. I also felt very grateful to have experienced an overseas university environment and extend my professional network. These international connections are an essential part of academic research and it is great that Professor Stern has also welcomed me back next year.

While I was overseas I was able to play cricket for the local Exeter Cricket Club where I was able to make a lot of new friends that made my time in Exeter more enjoyable. I even managed to do some self-funded traveling towards the end of my stay and experience some new cultures.

Overall, my four months overseas was extremely rewarding. While my data analysis skills have developed and I was able to investigate a pressing issue, I have noticed immense personal growth in the confidence I now have to take on new challenges and roles. I hope to use my experiences to encourage other students to get out of their comfort zone and take on new challenges.

Once again, thank you very much for allowing me this extremely valuable opportunity. A special thanks must also go to Professor Stern for all his help along the way.



Picture: Exeter Cathedral