



February 16, 2007

Student's name: Sarah Radke

Recommender: Dr. Suzanne L. West

Sarah Radke is currently enrolled as a second year student in the department of epidemiology Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH) program at the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina (UNC) Chapel Hill. The MSPH degree it is intended as a transition to a Doctor of Philosophy upon completion of the MSPH requirements. Students are accepted into the Master's program with the full expectation that they will complete their doctorate—as such they are of a higher caliber than Master's students from other schools.

Upon acceptance into the Master's program, Sarah was chosen as one of only two recipients for pre-doctoral funding through the UNC-GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Center of Excellence in Pharmacoepidemiology and Public Health in 2005. Her research experience was very impressive as she had worked on a unique project for the Ministry of Health in New Zealand. She was part of a team overseeing that country's largest ever mass immunization campaign and performed an essential role in the program's aim to eradicate meningococcal B, a disease that has been at epidemic levels in New Zealand since the early 1990's.

Sarah has continued to expand her existing knowledge of epidemiological methods through the School's intensive course requirements. In the first year, students must take three core epidemiology courses which involve lecture components and hands-on laboratory sessions, as well as a year long sequence in biostatistics. Sarah has done very well in the extremely rigorous program, which is evidenced by her being asked to be a teaching assistant for the Fall 2006 Fundamentals of Epidemiology course for majors. Sarah has a very strong mathematics background and opted to take a higher level biostatistics course than most epidemiology major take; she did very well in this course. Furthermore, she excelled in the epidemiology department's Mathematical Modeling of Infectious Diseases course taught by Dr. Annelies Van Rie.

Outside of class, Sarah is actively involved with a number of projects that reflect these same interests. To meet the requirements of her pre-doctoral funding, she must be involved in mentored research for at least 10 hours per week. Sarah actively sought a topic and mentor with a direct connection to the developing world—Dr. Steven Meshnick. The research involved constructing a mathematical model to estimate the proportional failure and re-infection rates in a randomized controlled trial conducted in Malawi, Africa, of azithromycin, artesunate or placebo added to sulfadoxine pyrimethamine as therapy for malaria in pregnancy. Because of Sarah's interest in international research, Dr. Meshnick invited her to spend 6 weeks in Malawi during the summer of 2006 to be an intern in the joint University of Malawi-UNC Summer Institute. Besides taking classes with public health students, she assisted the Blantyre District Health Board with a study of schistosomiasis. Her tasks included data collection from school-age children, development of a database for data entry, and assisting with the data analysis.

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For: Sarah Radke
From: Sue West
February 16, 2007

Sarah's interest and experience in vaccines from her work in New Zealand prompted an additional training opportunity with the Safety and Epidemiology teams at GSK's vaccine branch in Rixensart, Belgium. She is analyzing their spontaneous reports of adverse event data and exploring data mining techniques to detect potential safety signals. Sarah spent 6 weeks with the team in Belgium last summer and continues to work with the GSK team from North Carolina on a part-time basis while taking her required courses.

She has been a pleasure to teach, asks insightful questions during class, and works well with other students. She has presented numerous times in our pharmacoepidemiology journal club and handles public speaking very well. Through her engagement with faculty, staff, fellow students and others she comes into contact with, Sarah continually demonstrates her intelligence, outstanding drive, enthusiasm and ability, coupled with her openness, empathy and adaptability that will inevitably make her one of the most valuable contributors to the field of public health.

Without hesitation, I strongly recommend Sarah for the US-Africa Advanced Studies Institute on Mathematical Modeling of Infectious Diseases in Africa. Her mathematical aptitude and abilities are excellent and she has a very strong interest in infectious disease epidemiology. Her involvement with this training course will be mutually beneficial for the Institute and her ongoing academic and professional development. If you have any questions for me or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 919-966-7129 or by email at Sue.West@unc.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Suzanne West". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Suzanne L. West, MPH, PhD
Acting Director
UNC-GSK Center of Excellence in
Pharmacoepidemiology and Public Health