

**Ella Mencil – Baylor College of Medicine Internship
BLOG WEEK 5**

4/09/2017

Today was Labour Day so we had the day off work. Unfortunately, due to the hurricane a lot of celebrations around Houston were cancelled. Instead, we decided to head down to Buffalo Bayou Park in downtown Houston. It is a well know park in Texas with many attractions and pieces of art. With all the rain the river had overflowed on to the park grounds, so the paths and grounds were inaccessible. However, the views of the city were spectacular and it was lovely to get away from the noise for a while.

To celebrate the day, we all went to a ramen bar recommended to us by a colleague today and it was another delicious meal to add to the list!



Views of downtown



Flooding at Buffalo Bayou Park

5/09/17

The day of the much anticipated trip to NASA had finally arrived. As NASA had been closed due to Hurricane Harvey, today was the first available day for us to visit one of main attractions Houston is famous for. Here, at the NASA Johnson Space Centre, they house the Mission Control that was in charge of the flight control for all famous missions - among these, Apollo 11. We were extremely lucky to go on a weekday so there were no queues and we managed to see everything that was on offer. I do not think anyone has ever left there not wanting to become an Astronaut, myself included.



Astronaut training centre



Independence Shuttle



Ready for the tram tour!



Mission control



There were awesome displays everywhere we looked!

6/09/17

We have reached our last full day of work. With tomorrow being presentation day, today consisted of putting all our work together in a simple, well laid-out PowerPoint that would allow us to speak about our idea in a clear concise way. This whole week has been 'Wellness Week' at Baylor College of Medicine, aiming to provide a healthy environment for both its employees and students. There was a bouncy castle, obstacle course, meditation area, lots of music and smaller desks that were there to advertise different exercise classes that Baylor offered. Joining in with the activities was a great way to take our minds off our presentation tomorrow.



Meditating



At the bouncy castle

7/09/17

The final day! I cannot believe how fast this experience has gone by. To end it off with a bang, we got the opportunity to observe a surgery. It was one of the experiences I came to Houston hoping to have! It was planned resection of the right side of the liver on a patient who had liver cancer and this was performed by Dr Curley (Chief of Surgical Oncology). Upon further inspection during the surgery, it seemed that the pre-surgical imaging had given false hope of resecting the tumour and that it had spread to the hepatic vein. Although imaging has improved tenfold over the years, this is still a common problem and often nothing is certain until a surgeon has had the chance to look at the problem directly. As the patient had a cerotic liver, it was decided any drastic surgery would increase the risk of liver failure. It was decided that the tumour would be ablated. This involves a microwave needle being inserted into the tumour and essentially burning away the surroundings. This is done over and over to small sections. It is impossible to remove the tumour this way however, but it will give the patient more time, reduce pain caused by the mass and reduce risk of the tumour rupturing. This was definitely the highlight of my entire trip! We were so close to the site of the operation and got to see the tumour in detail whilst they were ablating. I only nearly fainted once, which I think is a real win considering it was my first time in the OR!

After Surgery, it was time for our presentations. We presented our group project and then our personal projects in front of Stuart, Matt, Andy and Brian Patrick, an Entrepreneur in residence at BCM. The presentations went very smoothly and there were some very challenging questions given to us at the end – most that we could answer. Stuart then sent off disclosure reports that would then allow Baylor to perform an IP search. If this comes back with positive results, then we will be able to continue with research surrounding the project and hopefully make our ideas a reality.

To end the day, we had a final meal with Stuart, Matt and Andy. Stuart took us to a “real” Texan BBQ restaurant, where I ate more meat than I thought was possible and fell into a food coma. It was a fantastic way to end our five week journey!



Dr Curley, Sam and I after the surgery



Texas BBQ

Final Thoughts.

Having arrived back in Leeds, I am facing the worst jetlag I have ever experienced, yet it is completely worth it! I am so very appreciative of this trip having learnt so much that my CV needs to be heavily edited. I never expected to be given so much independence and responsibility. The fact that I may be able continue with my personal project, long after I have finished the internship is an opportunity I never saw coming. Being able to really explore Houston after work and on the weekends was a huge bonus. Before this opportunity I would never have thought of visiting Houston, but now I would definitely go back! Thank you very much to the University of Leeds, Health Technologies Co-operation Foundation and Baylor College of Medicine for providing me with this incredible opportunity.