

Monash WHO Bioethics Intern Report – Zeb Jamrozik



Geneva is at her finest in Spring. The cherry trees planted in front of the World Health Organisation main building on Avenue Appia are bright with blossoms. By April, when I arrived, the snows were melting, the *Genevois* out in the streets, and the spectacular view to the Alps from the roof of the WHO seen with increasing clarity spread out under blue sky.

Global Health Ethics Unit

I was placed with Abha Saxena and Andreas Reis (left and right respectively in the picture below, on a sunny day by the lake) as supervisors, and also had some great interactions with Marisol Guraiib and the WHO Ethics Committee. The ethics group is relatively small and has a high workload, so interns can be very much involved with current projects, international meetings, and so on. The working language is English, but other WHO languages are also frequently used.

Areas of interest for the group during my internship included public health surveillance, ethics and health technologies, research ethics oversight, and infectious diseases (including HIV, tuberculosis, and, recently, ebola). I was lucky to be working on some relevant topics and was able to participate in the workings of the group with regards to surveillance (and the first meeting of a WHO Guideline Development Group on the subject), as well as pursue some of my own work in ethics and infectious diseases in collaboration with some great people who work at or with WHO.



The whole group was very welcoming and keen to have interns as part of the team – during my placement there were up to five in total, from three or four different countries. I worked most closely with Andreas, who was a great mentor, always offering to provide guidance on the tasks at hand. He was very helpful with WHO collaborations, and gave excellent advice about Geneva and other places to see in Switzerland and the rest of Europe.

Practicalities

Joining the WHO as an intern is much the same as being a small part of a very big organisation anywhere in the western world. There are a number of procedures and forms to be completed, nothing too exasperating, and once you have your badge and a computer login everything else is quite straightforward.

Arriving by air or by train and getting around town by public transport is also amazingly simple and efficient. Bus number 8 terminates at WHO (although it doesn't get that far on the weekends), and the 5 and F buses also stop close by. However, the city is – this can not be said enough – staggeringly expensive, and finding a place to live for a few months that is affordable, not too far away, and in a livable part of town is far from easy. I took the simplest option and stayed at the John Knox Centre like last year's Monash fellow (see her excellent and detailed guide). The serviced apartments are very comfortable but perhaps two or three times more expensive than shared apartments elsewhere. The major upside is that it is two minutes on foot from WHO. Likewise, the coffee and food in UN/WHO buildings is definitely the best in town in terms of value for money.



Broader Experience

One of the most exciting things about working at WHO, even as an intern, is the ability of the organization to convene experts from around the world to work together on important and challenging global policy problems. The ethics unit has a rich network of collaborating centres as well as links with individual scientists, clinicians and philosophers. I was able to witness the strength of these collaborations and participate in discussions regarding WHO policy and areas of research.

While working at the unit, I attended two very stimulating meetings at the Brocher Foundation (pictured above) on the outskirts of Geneva. One for the Guideline Development Group working on public health surveillance, and a summer academy – organized by the Brocher – bringing together senior and junior researchers working on problems of ethics, global health burden and resource allocation.

Overall, the experience has been a great bridge for me between what I learned in the Monash Masters of Bioethics program, my own ongoing academic work, and the world of global health policy – to which there can perhaps be no better introduction than spending valuable time at the World Health Organization in Geneva.