

**Learning Report for the 71st World Health Assembly and Youth Pre-World Health
Assembly on Global Health Diplomacy and Governance
At Geneva, Switzerland**

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This learning activity was divided into two parts: First, a pre-World Health Assembly (pre-WHA), which was attended by some 50 delegates from different medical, veterinary, dental, physiotherapy or public health schools from around the world. During these 4 days, I actively listened to the speakers and panellists, asking questions proactively especially regarding the situation in Hong Kong and how to adapt their multi-national strategies to a local level.

There were also workshops on stakeholder analyses, advocacy and social media usage, from which I learnt concrete skills to push for a real change in society. As most of the participants were Westerners (there were only 3 Southeast / East Asian participants), I noticed substantial differences between how advocacy work, youth-led political participation and youth consultations were conducted in other countries versus in Hong Kong. Although some of the skills I learnt in the pre-WHA may not be applicable in the local setting, these sessions allowed me to think beyond my comfort zone and think further than I usually do.

Lastly, with the intense collaboration and many evening social events, I got to know many new friends who are as passionate as I am about public health issues. In Hong Kong, very few medical students embark on an extra intercalated degree, whether in public health or in research. However, I found that this is common in other countries, most notably the United Kingdom. Apart from postgraduate studies, my fellow participants were also much more experienced in global health work, especially in their participation in the International Federation of Medical Students Association, or the equivalent student associations of their professions. I used to think of student advocacy as just another extra-curricular activity, but this journey made me think differently – students' work can be acknowledged by international experts and cause a real change in policy making.

The second part of the learning activity is the actual WHA, during which I had two remarkable experiences which are still fresh in my mind. First, I sat and listened to the committee meetings and plenary sessions in the Palace of the United Nations. The proceedings were mundane and there were lots of formalities, but nonetheless, I could

still observe the subtle differences in stance between the different member states. There were some stances well supported by public health evidence, or fundamental human rights which I thought were undisputable; but some member states could still have different considerations while making a national statement – religion, politics and financials could all affect politicians' final decision. Moreover, supporting a public health issue is one thing, but actively working towards the desirable goal is another. A lot of issues were mentioned during the WHA, but not all got equal attention. From this experience, I realised the intricacies of policy-making, and I learnt to see things in a non-medical point of view, which was usually the ultimate determinant of how things would turn out to be.

I also got the chance to meet the Prof Sophia Chan, Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Constance Chan, Director of Health and other doctors from the Hong Kong's delegation to the WHA. Although they stayed only for four days, I was very privileged to have the opportunity to chat and exchange with them my opinions on local public health issues. Even though I was only a medical student, they were still very welcoming and even introduced us to world renowned experts on different public health matters. They also shared with me sincerely about the nature of their work. I am very grateful for their hospitality towards me.

In conclusion, this trip allowed me to understand more about global health and realise how I can contribute to public health advocacy as a medical student. Till now, I am still actively participating in local public health promotion and consultation work, together with colleagues I knew from the WHA. This trip was really a memorable one-in-a-lifetime experience!







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