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Dear Kimberly Yousey-Hindes:

A small part of me felt apprehension about my summer internship choice at the Connecticut Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME). My main concern was the inability to connect my internship with infectious diseases, the topic I came to the Yale School of Public Health to learn more about, as the data on Hepatitis C and HIV among opioid-related fatalities in Connecticut is spotty at best.

Even so, I couldn't resist the pull. It was a perfect opportunity to study a topic close to my heart while learning more about the process of data collection. Further, I knew the geospatial data would be a treasure trove for my thesis. Ever since falling in love with GIS and later completing a Master's in GIS & Web Map Programming in 2017, I've been partial to datasets that allow me to make beautiful maps and perform spatial analysis.

My experience at the OCME is what makes me particularly well-suited for this Epidemiologist I position at Yale's Emerging Infection Program. Over the summer, while collecting opioid fatality data, I pored over several documents: toxicology results, the investigation, and each autopsy. Every case had nuances that needed to be collected systematically. I spent many a sunny day cooped up inside the OCME, but I felt cheated out of none. Along with my apprehension for sitting in on autopsies, my concern about having no link to infectious diseases for my thesis melted away as the summer went on. I knew I was learning skills that would translate into infectious disease research, as well.

A lesson I took from my internship is that I enjoy data collection almost as much as the task of analyzing and visualizing it. The whole process, from start to finish, is anything but mundane. What I love about data collection is how close it brings you to the human represented by each row of an Excel sheet or each point on a map. It's easy to see the true impact of what we do.

My experience gathering data from an outside agency, the OCME, also taught me that building rapport with the folks who allow us to collect these data is an important part of the process. Even if they are legally obliged to let us get our hands on it, the process goes so smoothly if you remember to be gracious.

Further, my coursework at the Yale School of Public Health has given me an understanding of the dynamic flu virus in all its forms. The foundational *Principles of Infectious Disease* and *Immunology for Epidemiologists* classes taught me how we understand the the virus and its interactions with the host, as well as the laboratory methods used to confirm infection. On a population scale, *Quantitative Methods for Infectious Disease Epidemiology* and *Intro to Public Health Surveillance* helped me delve into the data collection and analyses available for infectious diseases. Those courses helped me solidify my idea that infectious disease data collection and analysis is my cup of tea.

Having worked with many datasets, large and small, over the past couple of years, I'm comfortable cleaning data in Excel and preparing it for analysis. Additionally, my coursework at Yale has bolstered my statistical analysis skills; while I'm still more adept in R, I picked up SAS quickly in *Advanced Analytical Methods in Epidemiology* and I'm comfortable finding documentation online for the analyses I haven't performed yet.

Post graduation in May, I will be staying in New Haven as my husband begins his own foray into Yale graduate studies. I hope to find an opportunity that sparks joy in me the same way that my summer internship did. This opportunity at the EIP is a perfect fit because of my appreciation for data collection and analysis, my understanding of the flu virus and flu surveillance from my coursework at Yale, and my experience working with outside agencies to secure data. I appreciate your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Natalee Desotell