

My name is Sharania and I have just completed my Bachelor of Exercise Physiology (Professional Honours) at the University of Tasmania. As part of the degree, it was required that we completed 420 hours of practicum placement. Among my practicum sites were the NJF Wellness, Launceston General Hospital, the John L Grove Rehabilitation Centre and the Charles Heart Clinic, which allowed me to work closely with the local community in Launceston, Tasmania.

During my time at each placement site, I gained valuable experiences that will give me the confidence to continue helping the community with improving their health and well-being after I graduate and become an Accredited Exercise Physiologist. In terms of professional skills, I have learned so much while on placements such as prescribing exercise programs to a range of clients depending on their conditions and abilities, setting achievable goals and establishing a plan to reach them, providing education to those with low health literacy to better understand their conditions and also conducting individual health assessments to enable comparisons to be made with pre- and post- results, also ensuring their progress during any exercise program is monitored to help them achieve their goals. Besides that, I also had the privilege to work alongside multiple allied health professionals such as Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists and Allied Health Assistants, who all provided me with the knowledge of treating patients with a multidisciplinary approach, and provided me with a good insight to the Tasmanian Health System. I also improved my communication skills and interpersonal skills while working with a variety of clients that presented at the hospital and the heart clinic. I also got to improve my ability to work in a team setting, noting that understanding the role that each health professional plays can greatly impact the patients' health outcomes. I was also lucky enough to assist with stress echocardiogram tests and also learn more about common cardiac irregularities, and briefly on how to interpret the results from a sonogram of the heart from cardiologists and cardiac sonographers who have a number of years of experience in the field.

After completing 4 placements in Launceston and living here for almost 5 years while completing my courses, I have come to enjoy the local community and can see myself working here after graduation. Presently, I actively involve myself in local community events such as volunteering with the University at Open Day activities and at the local harvest market when available, while also assisting with the local football club as a sports trainer. I would like to continue my efforts in helping the local community improve their health outcomes as Tasmania has a high prevalence of health conditions, such as heart diseases, diabetes and obesity. I hope that after obtaining a job in any rural setting, I would be able to give back to the community that helped me learn as a student through practicum placements at the hospitals and clinics, which enabled me to become an Exercise Physiologist.

I would like to thank the committee members of the NAFEA student scholarship, because they provided me assistance in terms of placement related costs as all the placement hours were fulltime and unpaid in this rural area. As an international student, I also had a casual job waitressing but that was not enough to cover all the cost such as fuel to travel daily to my practicum site, parking costs, accommodation costs as I started my placement prior to the start of the semester and meal costs. The scholarship assisted me greatly as I was not able to work more than 20 hours a week, and with the fulltime placement, I was not left with much time of my own to work but could keep up with the study load that were on-going in the semester with the scholarship. It helped me lower the burden of stress associated with financial stability and reduced the burden that I placed on my parents who were supporting me financially when I was on placement. I highly recommend students to undertake placements at a rural setting because the learning opportunities are endless under good guidance and support.

Thank you.