

## Report on the 2019 Residential Summer Course in Epidemiology

The 32<sup>nd</sup> Residential 3-week Summer Course in Epidemiology held in Florence, Italy was organized by the European Educational Programme in Epidemiology. I am privileged to receive an international training grant from the Norwegian Research School in Global Health (NRS GH) that enabled me to attend this programme which run from the 17<sup>th</sup> June to 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019.



University of Bergen PhD students during the advanced epidemiological methods course with biostatistician from Florence, Italy. Located on the far-left of this picture is myself, Linda Kampata.

This 3-week summer course was intense and it covered basic, intermediate and advanced topics in both epidemiological methods and statistical models in epidemiology. During the basic and intermediate courses in the first two weeks, the teaching methods were similar. In the morning sessions, lectures were given to the whole group, followed by individual/group practical class exercise, and then regrouping of the whole class to discuss the solutions to the practical exercises. In the afternoon session, we broke into smaller supervised groups where we worked either individually or within a group of 2 to 3 participants on case study practical exercise which we later discussed the solutions with assigned group lecturers. The third week of the advanced courses (advanced statistical topics and infectious disease epidemiology) had different courses in the morning and afternoon, though the teaching methods were similar in that there were hands on practical work after each lecture session. All the practical work and exercises were performed using STATA. Moreover, we had an opportunity to seek clarification and guidance from main and co-lecturers/assistants, in all sessions.

Scheduled social activities were organized during the week in form of welcome drinks “weekly sangria party” – to meet and socialize with the lecturers and participants of the week; walks up the hills to Fiesole; as well as sightseeing in Florence City over the weekends.

This course has been very beneficial. It served as a refresher course on the basic epidemiological methods and skills on the statistical models in epidemiology. Not only did it refresh some concepts, but it consolidated and clarified some gaps as well as gained additional and advanced knowledge on epidemiological methods as well as skills on the statistical models in epidemiology. The course has helped in the improvements of my PhD work as I have been able to implement relevant adjustments to my doctoral work. But most of all, it gave me some great relief, comfort and affirmation on the work that I have done so far.

The course gave me an opportunity to meet, converse and make new friends with diverse people from many countries. We had some great discussions and diverse insights on various public health issues and how they are tackled in both developed and developing countries. I look forward to network with some of the young and seasoned researchers I met at this course in future collaborative work.

Overall, the three-week course was very good and satisfactory. We had expert/seasoned epidemiologists and statisticians from European universities and research institutions as lecturers that were knowledgeable with vast skills and experience. The lecturers were able to explain the complicated concepts in a simple and understandable fashion. The hands-on practical opportunities after each theoretical daily session was great as it helped consolidate what we just learned. In addition, the data analysis exercises in the afternoon offered more opportunities to acquire statistical skills as it was more application based, i.e. application of the theoretical concepts and whatever we learnt using real data. An added advantage was that some lecturers/biostatisticians were approachable and willing to work with me to address some of the unclear and unclarified issues with my PhD work.

Most of the participants including myself were accommodated at Centro Studi where the course was taking place. The staff were kind and the venue offered as an Italian experience as they served our meals with Italian cuisines accompanied with Italian wines and olive oil, and the tea-breaks with Italian strong coffee and snacks. The venue and its location were convenient for study as it was located in the outskirts of Florence, roughly about 20 to 30 minutes from Central Florence depending on traffic. It was a perfect spot for physical activity - a half hour walks with a breath-taking view up the hills to Fiesole.

Strong recommendations are given to all PhD students performing quantitative studies in global health.

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the NRSFH who awarded me an international training grant to enable me pay for the course fees and attend this 3-week intense summer course in Florence, Italy.

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