

Reflective Essay

The project I am submitting to the Hannon Library Undergraduate Research award was originally an assignment in Dr. Hawley Almstedt's Advanced Nutrition course. Students were asked to compose a paper on any topic of their choice relevant to the field of nutrition using research from at least ten sources, half of which were required to be from peer-reviewed journals.

I was first inspired to write my paper on amylin after hearing about the hormone and its exciting potential in a newspaper article. I already had an interest in endocrinology because of other classes, so this was intriguing to me. I didn't know much about amylin so I had to do preliminary research to see if amylin was a viable subject for a semester-long research paper. I discovered a plethora of material in every science, health and biochemical chemical journal imaginable. In short, plenty of material was available. To fit criteria of the class assignment, I had to alter my thesis to better address how amylin affects nutrition and its importance to those who study and work in the field.

The primary tool for my research was Hannon Library's online databases. I found that the Medline and Pubmed databases returned the most and best quality results. Sometimes, I would search one of these databases and a PDF version was available for free directly from the database. However, in many instances only the abstract was available on Pubmed. On these occasions I employed one of Hannon's best services, which would search LMU's many other databases such as ScienceDirect and EBSCOhost to furnish a link to one that had the full-text version available free of charge.

On three occasions, I found articles whose abstracts indicated that the full article would contain important information for my paper. However, no resources could provide the full PDF version of the article. In these cases, I took advantage of the inter-library loan system. With help from library employees at the Information desk, I filled out inter-library loan request form. In each instance, the research articles I requested were e-mailed to me within a week.

Most invaluable was the access to database search engines. I used the resources made available in the LibGuides to start but once I found the first few papers, the databases suggested other relevant articles based on bibliographies from papers I had already found. These suggestions helped me explore deeper in the subject. Once I had found articles, access to free full length PDF articles was key. This access made research easy and inexpensive. Without it, I would otherwise have had to pay for every article. Moreover, online PDF's enabled me to search keywords within papers to quickly navigate through the stacks of information and find the evidence that I needed. The third most important resource were the Citation Styles and CITESOURCE pages on LibGuides. I used the examples provided as a reference for how to properly format my bibliography page and in-text citations in APA style.

Whenever doing research, one must consider the validity of the data and the reliability of the source. To ensure that I was using credible information, I had to check that I was getting peer-reviewed data. Database searches returned articles from reliable and well-known journals whose articles had citations to support their content. One exception was an article from the *New York Times* I found through a Google search. The article provided basic information which was consistent with peer-reviewed articles. Thus, I deemed this source trustworthy. Especially for research evaluating the effectiveness of pramlintide as a medication, I had to be mindful of

authors' motivations. Several articles I cited were funded by the pharmaceutical companies who sell pramlintide. Naturally, a bias for favorable results would exist. In all cases, these papers were forthcoming with their affiliations and funding. Nonetheless, I was sure to balance my paper with articles from independent authors in this section to ensure that a bias did not come through in my own writing.

This assignment was a learning experience. I became very familiar with the use of the library's resources and made use of many different tools to find information. I got exposure to an expert level of science and learned a great deal about my subject, and it inspired an interest in research I did not have before.