

Sasakawa Nursing Fellow 2022 Progress Report

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Pediatric Nurse Practitioner - Acute Care Course track

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1. Progress on Academic Goals

1) Background and original goals

I am a first-year Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) student in the Pediatric Nurse Practitioner track at the University of Washington. After obtaining my Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) at Keio University in 2014, I worked as a pediatric nurse for nine years at Keio University Hospital, where I realized how limited the scope of practice for nurses is in Japan, which impacts patient outcomes. I also realized how myriad inequitable factors, even within the Japanese health system, impacted healthcare access and outcomes. These experiences motivate my goal to expand the role of nurses and ultimately increase healthcare access and improve health outcomes. To achieve these goals, I entered the DNP program as a Sasakawa Nurse Fellow to learn in an environment where nurses' roles continue to evolve in response to meeting health system needs.

My objectives for the 2022 Academic year were below;

Objective1: Obtain a whole picture of the U.S. political and healthcare system

Objective2: Understand the origin of Nurse practitioners (NP) and how the NP roles have developed in the U.S. healthcare system

Objective 3: Develop a wider perspective on health disparities and solutions for affected communities.

2) Progress on the goals

Objective 1: Obtain a whole picture of the U.S. political and healthcare system

U.S. healthcare and U.S. political systems were both required courses for DNP students. One of the assignments was to participate in a policy meeting, and I chose to join lobbying, where people meet and discuss bills with legislators to support passing bills. While lobbying is not common in Japan, it is very common in the U.S. Through the Health Equity Circle, a group of multidisciplinary health science student club across Washington state, I got an opportunity to join Lobbying in Olympia, the capital of the State of Washington. On the lobby day, I met three legislators to promote the specific bills that will improve health equity, and presented the issues and background information to the legislators.

I also joined the Nurse Advocacy Camp led by the Washington State Nurse Association (WSNA), where the participants learned about the current health issues and the progress of bills that the WSNA supports. As of February 2023, the WASA is particularly focusing on creating the minimum nurse-to-patient ratio,¹ which only California state has the regulation, and the Washington State Hospital Association is strongly opposing the bill.² Combined with the required lectures, the Advocacy Camp, and the Lobbying experience in Olympia, I was able to obtain a whole picture of the U.S. healthcare and political system and to get the fundamental knowledge in the policy development process as well as advocacy.

Objective 2: Understand the origin of NP and how the NP roles have developed in the U.S.

In the first year of the DNP program, all students study together regardless of their tracks, such as the Pediatric NP track and Family NP track. Over the past two quarters, we learned the overview of the role of NPs and the scope of practice. We also learned that the scope restrictions are different state by state, even in the same country. There are three types of practices for NPs; Full Practice, Reduced Practice, and Restricted Practice, which define how much NPs need to be supervised by other professionals.³

In addition, NP education is going through a transitional period. The current national requirement to become an NP is to obtain a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) or DNP degree. By 2025, however, all future NPs will have to be educated in a doctoral degree program rather than a Master's degree in order

to respond to complex and diverse health needs.⁴ The significant difference between MSN-prepared and DNP-prepared NPs is that DNP-prepared NPs are expected to play a role not only at the individual/community level but also at the system/political level.⁵ I will further explore the NP roles and their practices throughout my DNP program.

Objective 3: Develop a wider perspective on health disparities and solutions for affected communities

To obtain a wider perspective on health, I enrolled in the Graduate Certificate in Global Health Nursing program in addition to my DNP program. Over the past two quarters, I have learned about human health from various perspectives, such as in a social, cultural, and ecological context. One course is about Social Determinants of Health, which is the factors that impact health outcomes (i.e., racial background and socioeconomic status).⁶ I also learned about planetary health and one health, which explains how human health is closely related to animal and environmental health. These classes made me realize how unfair/unjust inequities are existing in the world that impacts health outcomes among affected communities. While I was able to develop a wider perspective on health disparities, identifying solutions has not been met.

As of March 2023, I am supposed to participate in one of the university-led studies abroad projects in the Amazon Rainforest in Peru. Combined with the opportunity, I plan to conduct my capstone project for my Global Health Nursing certificate program. I will investigate healthcare access and barriers that limit healthcare access while exploring how to mitigate the barriers. Further progress will be reported in my next annual report of 2023.

3) Next objectives for the 2023 Academic Year

Objective 1: By October 2023, complete a written final report of my global health project with a synthesis of the literature and new perspectives and insight gained from my study abroad experiences.

Objective 2: By December 2023, make a final presentation of the capstone project to the Center for Global Health Nursing and submit the final report to a peer-reviewed journal, aiming to publish.

Objective 3: By the end of 2023, describes how to propose solutions for affected communities and the NP roles to mitigate existing inequity.

2. Report on life in Seattle

1) Geography and Environment of Seattle

Seattle is the closest city in the U.S. to Tokyo, which takes only 9 hours with a direct flight. Seattle has lots of nature around the campus and neighborhood. Both mountain and the ocean are accessible within a one-hour drive. Various hiking courses are one of the most popular activities across greater Seattle. While the summer season was the best weather, there were many rainy days during the winter.

2) Cost of Living and Safety in Seattle

Compared to other cities in the U.S., the cost of living in Seattle is relatively high. The average housing rent has been notoriously increasing; the average of one-bedroom in Seattle is \$1,681 in 2022.⁷

However, as an international graduate student as a Sasakawa Nurse Fellow, \$1000 per month of living expenses was very much sufficient for me to enjoy the campus and explore neighbor areas.

In relation to the increased cost of living, homelessness is one of the most serious issues in Seattle. The homeless population has increased by 13% in only two years from 2020 to 2022.⁸ While I have never felt unsafety around the campus, the crime rate in downtown Seattle has increased.

3) Demographic and public transportation in Seattle

While white populations account for 80% of the entire population in Washington state, Seattle is greatly diverse, where Asian and Black/African American account for 16% and 7%, respectively.⁸ I have been feeling that everything in Seattle is very inclusive and welcoming since I moved here in July 2022. Public transport has many options, such as buses and trains. As all students at the University of Washington can use all of the transportation, including ferries and water taxis, it is very convenient to live.

4) University of Washington

There are 118 students in the DNP program, and there are 13 students in the Pediatric NP program. While I am the only international student in the DNP program, all my classmates and the faculty are very supportive. In addition, the University of Washington has a lot of resources and opportunities. I appreciate the university's greater communities among people from a wide range of fields.

5) Overall

Overall, my life in Seattle for the past eight months has been greatly productive and enjoyable. I am very excited to learn more about health and explore Seattle for the next two years.

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