

Advanced Undergraduate Research Award (AURA)

This summer, I volunteered at HOPE Clinic Main, specifically assisting with their Welcome Baby Bag program. HOPE Clinic is a full-time Federally Qualified Health Center, whose mission is to provide healthcare services to all people, especially those who are uninsured and/or low-income and those with limited English proficiency. Located in Houston's Chinatown, they serve patients from a diverse range of backgrounds and languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Korean, and aim to serve these patients without any prejudice in a culturally and linguistically competent manner.

In collaboration with the Children's Museum Houston, HOPE Clinic's Welcome Baby Bag program aims to engage parents in their children's early literacy and brain development. As the representative, I educate parents on their babies' brain development when I offer the Welcome Baby Bag to eligible patients. Patients were eligible if they were 2-9 months old, residents of Harris County, and eligible to receive government support, such as Medicaid, WIC, SNAP, and CHIP.

By thoughtfully walking parents through infant developmental milestones and encouraging them to be proactive in their child's growth, I hoped to empower them to improve their parent-child interactions and their children's long-term outcomes, such as childhood development and academic success. Through conversations and reviews of their surveys, I witnessed and became more aware of sociocultural factors that impacted the parents' interactions with their children and influenced their perceptions of their role in their babies' brain development. My understanding of these factors has motivated me to identify ways to reduce health disparities and improve patient health outcomes through education and empowerment as I continue to pursue a future career in medicine.

During this experience, I appreciated my Asian Studies courses, such as Race in Modern Asia, for providing a strong foundation for understanding the intersection of our various identities, such as race, class, and native language, and demonstrating mindfulness of their impact on different aspects of life, including health. Many of the families whom I interacted with spoke in a language that I was unfamiliar with or came from life experiences that I had never encountered. I learned the importance of linguistic and cultural competency when I worked with medical assistants and translators to communicate with patients to ensure their understanding, as well as communication skills for building trust and rapport with these vulnerable populations.

Thank you to the Chao Center of Asian Studies and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Gee for their generous support that allowed me to pursue this volunteering opportunity. I look forward to continuing to volunteer at this clinic for the next year and learn from the diverse patient population that it serves.

