When I submitted my application for the SPHPM Summer Vacation Scholarship Program I had an idea about how it would enhance my undergraduate studies, but I didn't anticipate the extent to which it would prove beneficial.

Before I started the Summer Vacation Program, I felt that it would offer a great opportunity to learn and participate in research, and gain insight into an aspect of my degree; including where it could lead in a professional setting. During my four weeks in the Scholarship Program I worked as part of the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Research Centre (ANZIC-RC), most notably as a second reviewer for a systematic review on “What is the effect of early mobilisation in ICU on mortality and functional recovery”. As second reviewer I am in the process of screening 8080 articles and have extracted data from five articles to date that had been selected as eligible. From this I have garnered an in depth knowledge of what a systematic review is comprised of, and some of the many steps involved in undertaking and completing such a research project.

The School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine Summer Vacation Scholarship Program has gifted me, as a first year Bachelor of Health Science student, with knowledge and experience within the field and realm of my studies. By putting into practice what I was taught in my undergraduate studies I was able to better understand how everything was interconnected and worked together. Whilst I have not as yet undertaken any research specific subjects in my current course I know that my experiences in the SPHPM Summer Vacation Program will greatly benefit me in future subjects. The Summer Vacation Program gave me exposure to several aspects and types of research, so now when I undertake research subjects I will have personal experience to relate it to, not just the textbook examples.

I have established and developed skills in research related computer programs including Endnote, Microsoft Access (utilized to provide a bespoke database entry system for an Observational Study), RGMS, & Covidence; program for assisting with streamlining Systematic Review processes that was developed by Alfred Health.

Four major ways in which the Summer Vacation Program has personally influenced me are;

1. I now intend to pursue a research based Honours year after I finish my current undergraduate studies.
2. Pending completion of the tasks required of me, I will be listed as a contributing author for the systematic review that I have contributed work towards.
3. I will continue to highly recommend and promote the SPHPM Summer Vacation Program as an extracurricular activity of great benefit to friends and colleagues within my course, and other courses in health fields. It is an experience I would be happy to repeat if I had the opportunity. A combination of an undergraduate degree and the Summer Vacation Program create a positive feedback system where both enhance the learning and benefits that can be achieved from the other.
4. It has reaffirmed my belief that I am in the right field and have a passion for public health.

The Summer Vacation Program provided great insight and realism into the connections between research and health promotion, and their impact on clinical practice. It has also allowed me to establish great networking and connections with other students and professionals within the health disciplines.