

It's not goodbye, it's just see you later

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Although my internship at BANGL has ended, the experience was incredibly rewarding. I have learned incredible scientific techniques and specific lab protocols. While my understanding on research has been developed, the biggest appreciation I have from my time at BANGL is the environment of support that the lab fosters.

While the lab is dedicated to finding answers to improve maternal health and infant development, we always prioritize the participants' privacy and comfort and strive to remind them of their contribution. While working on the amendments to the IRB to create a biobank for the biological samples, the lab discussed how the participants would be involved. They will be able to decide whether or not they want to donate their samples. In order to keep the participants connected to the other projects, we decided to post the studies that use the biobank on our website. Additionally, I wrote birthday cards, a small gesture to show the participants we care about them and their involvement in the study. Others wrote thank you cards to express gratitude.

Beyond the study, I have felt supported academically and personally. I was enrolled in genetics over the summer as well, and I was excited when I actually understood what was being discussed at lab meetings. Genetics is not an easy subject, but I am glad that the lab directly applied the information. The studies assess telomere length, DNA methylation, single nucleotide polymorphisms, and other genetic topics. The lab supplemented my learning in the classroom.

This semester I am studying in Buenos Aires, Argentina. While I am disappointed that my work in the lab is paused, I am excited to explore a new environment. As previously mentioned, I must complete an Independent Study Project (ISP). The lab not only helped calm my worries before my departure, but also helped me think of ideas to explore for my ISP. Because the lab focuses on the maternal infant dyadic relationship, a mentor suggested I explore the dyad in relation to the desaparecidos (or the disappeared). During the 1970s, many children and young adults in Buenos Aires were removed from their families. Many have been reunited and I am curious how the separation has affected their own family interactions. While I have time to decide my project, this was a helpful area of exploration.

I have so much appreciation for the work of BANGL and everyone in the lab. I cannot wait to return in January and learn more about the lab and continue to develop my understanding of how to properly conduct research.