

## Studentship Blog – Ralph Greenwood

I am a Biomedical student entering my 3<sup>rd</sup> year. In my first year at the University of Manchester it was heavily emphasised the importance of lab experience when applying for jobs in research, with a placement year being encouraged. However, I loved my friendship group and did not want to return from my placement year to no friends. Instead, I decided against the placement year and to gain lab experience through summer placements, so I was thrilled when I was awarded the BPS vacation studentship under the supervision of Dr Pritchard.

We decided to base the 8-week project on the cause of incontinence in Alzheimer's Disease patients, which has long been thought to be due to impaired cognition leading to a loss of bladder control. It was my job to try and disprove this theory. Initially, I found the range of lab techniques difficult to get my head around, but fortunately my supervisor and the rest of my lab colleagues were very helpful and patient. I quickly adapted to the laboratory environment and my skills and confidence in performing the techniques improved rapidly. The wide range of techniques I learned/ improved in, including dissections, data analysis, and myographs have provided me with experience that make me a more valuable member for employers. After several experiments, I found that Alzheimer's Diseased bladders were significantly more contractile in response to an applied electrical field stimulation than wt bladders. This indicated a pathophysiological difference in presynapses of neural pathways controlling bladder contraction in Alzheimer's Diseased bladders.

This vacation studentship has improved my confidence and technical skills, whilst also providing me with that crucial laboratory experience that is crucial for getting a job in research or applying for PhDs. Separately from the academic value, this experience also allowed me to make new friends and was a really enjoyable 8 weeks.