

Final report

Internship abroad

Personal data and general information on the internship

Subject of studies: Epidemiology

Bachelor/Master/State exam: Master

Time of internship: 01.08.2025 – 29.10.2025

Place of internship: Lyon, France

Internship institution: International Agency for Research on Cancer - World Health Organisation

Guidelines:

- The report should have a length of at least **4 DIN A4 pages** (Times New Roman, 12pt, 1.5 line spacing)
- If you want to give names, please do not give the full name of the person. Use only the first name or abbreviations such as "L."
- When integrating photos, please note that your report requires the consent of the person(s) photographed when published and distributed.
- Please save your report as a word document (max. file size: 8 MB) and upload it to MoveON.
- If you are looking for a little inspiration for your own report or would like to compare your experiences with those of other students, please feel free to have a look at our [website](#).

I am currently completing my master's degree in Epidemiology at Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich and, as part of the program, I am required to complete a compulsory internship. I initially knew I wanted to use this opportunity to complete the internship abroad, both to gain international experience in public health and to challenge myself by working in a new environment. The opportunity to intern at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organisation, came somewhat unexpectedly. My program coordinators organised an information session on potential internships for our cohort, and this is where I first learned about the position in Lyon, France. The purpose of the WHO has always been inspiring to me, so I was excited about the chance to complete my internship here. Additionally, I already speak French, so the idea of living and working in France felt like a natural fit.

The application process was relatively informal due to an existing collaboration with LMU. I applied by reaching out to the IARC supervisor and expressing my interest. After a short interview call, they offered me an internship on the following topic: *The economic burden of informal caregiving for cancer patients*. This topic was interesting to me, since it combined my studies in epidemiology with my personal interest in the social behavioural aspects of health. The administrative procedures were straightforward, except for one significant complication: as a Canadian citizen, I required a visa for the duration of my stay. Because IARC could not sponsor it, the only solution was to limit the internship to three months, which matched the time I could legally remain in France without a sponsored visa. Once this limitation was accepted, the remaining paperwork with IARC and the Erasmus program was simple, mostly just forms, insurance, and online registrations.

The most stressful part of the preparation was finding accommodation. I began searching about six weeks before my planned start date, focusing primarily on short-term sublets in flat shares. I used *La carte des colocs* and Facebook groups but quickly realized that short-term subletting is not common in France. Many landlords preferred long-term tenants and did not consider applicants staying only a few months. I also needed to be mindful of safety when choosing a neighbourhood, so I asked friends and acquaintances living in Lyon or originally from there for advice. After many unanswered messages and polite refusals from landlords, I eventually found a flat share one week before my arrival. Although the lease was officially for one year, the landlord agreed that I could leave after three months since the law in France states that you only need to give one month's notice to exit a lease. This arrangement was a huge relief and allowed me to finalize my travel plans.

I took the train from Munich to Lyon two days before my internship started to allow myself the weekend to explore and settle in. Because I grew up in Montreal, Canada, a French-speaking environment, adapting to Lyon wasn't too difficult. My flatmate was friendly and welcoming and showed me around the city on my first weekend. We visited a local market for fresh produce and walked through several central neighbourhoods, such as the Presqu'île. Lyon has two main rivers that pass through the city, the Rhone and Saone. There are beautiful boardwalks along the rivers and many places to sit. This area is a central part of the city and is very lively, with cafes and restaurants all around.

On my first day at IARC, I was welcomed at the office by the PhD student who would be supervising me. She gave me and another intern from LMU, a tour of the facility and got us set up with IT and our laptops. We met with our main supervisor for an introductory meeting on our respective research projects, including an overview of the topic and what is expected. I was given a clear guideline on how I should begin my work. Because the project was in its very early stages, my role consisted of building a foundation from scratch.

My primary tasks included an extensive review of both peer-reviewed and grey literature to understand existing research, methodological approaches and data gaps. I then began identifying national surveys that could potentially include questions related to informal caregiving. This involved reading survey documentation, evaluating questionnaires, checking which population groups were targeted and determining whether the surveys included variables relevant to caregiving for cancer patients. Once a survey appeared promising, I would download and clean the dataset, derive variables related to caregiving hours and conduct preliminary analyses to estimate the average number of informal care hours provided in each country.

This was more challenging than I initially expected. Reliable and comparable data on informal caregiving were limited, especially outside high-income countries. Many surveys mentioned caregiving but did not differentiate between cancer and other conditions. Still, I was able to develop a list of countries where meaningful estimates could be derived. In the later stages of the internship, I contributed to the first steps of the economic analysis by linking average caregiving hours with national wage indicators to approximate the economic value of informal care.

My daily routine followed a typical 9-5 workday, and I worked fully in person at the IARC offices with the possibility of working from home, if needed. I appreciated the balance between independence and guidance: I was able to explore different analytical approaches on my own, but my supervisor was always available for questions or feedback. Weekly or bi-weekly

meetings helped track progress and there were occasional departmental presentations where interns shared their work.

The workload varied throughout the internship. The first few weeks were research heavy as I familiarized myself with the project, reviewed literature and mapped out potential data sources. The middle period was more intensive as it involved handling large datasets, performing data cleaning, resolving inconsistencies and running analyses in R. Although I sometimes felt challenged, especially when documentation was unclear or datasets were complex, I never felt overwhelmed. The independence I was given made the process more rewarding and improved my confidence as a researcher.

One of the highlights of my time at IARC was the social environment. The department was incredibly international, with interns, PhD students and researchers from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. Everyone made an effort to include newcomers, whether through lunch invitations, after-work outings or simple daily conversations. During my stay, several social activities were organized, including dinners, and a weekend trip to Chamonix-Mont-Blanc. About twelve of us from the department joined this outing which allowed us to bond outside of work. Exploring the town together, enjoying local food and being surrounded by mountains created some of my favourite memories from the internship. The supportive and multicultural atmosphere at IARC made it easy to connect with others and contributed significantly to my positive experience.

My everyday life in Lyon quickly developed its own rhythm, with my morning commute to the office, finding my favourite bakeries and neighbourhoods even showing my friends and family around the city when they came to visit. Outside of work hours, I really appreciated the weekend trips I was able to attend. I was able to visit various places in France, such as Annecy, Lille and Reims. Annecy is this lovely little city near the Swiss border, with a beautiful lake and surrounding mountains. It was close enough that I was able to go for a day, which saves on cost. I left early in the morning, started the day over there with a hike on Mont-Barron, enjoyed a swim in the clear blue lake, and finished the day by walking around the city and grabbing dinner before taking the bus back to Lyon. This was one of my favourite days on my trip. Being so close to the Alps was particularly meaningful to me, as I enjoy nature and hiking.

In terms of cost of living, I found Lyon relatively affordable, especially coming from Munich. Rent was considerably cheaper, groceries were approximately the same price, and public transportation was reliable and reasonably priced for students. Restaurants and leisure activities, however, were quite expensive, so I limited how often I ate out or participated in

paid outings. Though there are many beautiful areas to hang out with friends without spending money.

This internship allowed me to apply many of the concepts I had learned during my master's program so far. Most significantly, I used RStudio extensively for data analysis. Before this internship, I had only applied R in a classroom setting, with structured guidance. Working on an independent research project forced me to explore new functions, troubleshoot errors, and develop more efficient workflows. This greatly improved my confidence with the software and strengthened my analytical skills.

The project also pushed me to deepen my understanding of epidemiology, health economics, and global health. I was able to link theoretical concepts from my courses to real-world data and contribute to a meaningful research question. Beyond technical skills, the internship helped me develop science communication abilities through presentations and regular progress meetings. Presenting my work to senior researchers at the end of my internship was both challenging and rewarding, and it helped me become more comfortable speaking in professional settings.

Overall, the experience reaffirmed my interest in this field and motivated me to pursue further opportunities in cancer epidemiology and global public health. It also encouraged me to think more concretely about my next steps after completing my master's degree.

My expectations for this Erasmus internship were not only met but exceeded. The quality of the research, the supportive environment, and the opportunity to explore France made the experience deeply meaningful. The biggest challenge was personal: adjusting to a new country for the second time within a year and settling in for only three months made it difficult to feel fully rooted. Still, the short duration encouraged me to make the most of every week.

The most defining parts of the experience were the connections I made, the progress I achieved in my research skills, and the places I was able to visit during my free time. Lyon itself left a strong impression with its beauty, rivers, culture, and proximity to nature.

For future interns, I would offer a few tips: start searching for accommodation early, as short-term options can be limited; be proactive in asking questions and seeking guidance during the internship; take advantage of the international environment and connect with people; and remain flexible, as plans and project directions can shift. Most importantly, be open to learning beyond your comfort zone, both academically and personally.



Figure 1 : Croix-Rousse, Lyon



Figure 2 : Rhone, Lyon



Figure 3 : Rhone, Lyon



Figure 4 : Annecy, France



Figure 5 : Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, France



Figure 6 : Cave de champagne, Reims