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Research was always one of my favorite classes in school. Being able to make novel discoveries about topics that could make real, meaningful impacts on the world was something I was always interested in. That's why I was so excited to be a part of GNBCC's summer program this year to learn more about breast cancer and its environmental causes as well as the scientific field as a whole. This summer, I was able to learn from Dr. Vandenberg through a virtual program and worked on two projects: an informative podcast and a study on ethinyl estradiol.

Throughout the internship, Dr. Vandenberg taught us not only the facts about environmental risks and breast cancer, but also science through different lenses. Understanding science and research is important, but an important theme I learned this summer is that getting that science out to the public is just as important. One lesson that was really memorable was about how companies can manipulate information to hurt the public's view of scientists' credibility. Along with learning about advocacy, we were given the opportunity to do it ourselves. This summer, my teammates and I were able to make a podcast about the environmental links to breast cancer. We interviewed public health advocates from across the country and created two scripted episodes. I had never interviewed someone before so I was nervous at first. But as we got to the first interviews, the advocates were extremely friendly and loved to talk to us. I ended up really enjoying the hours I spend talking to these professionals and learned a lot about advocacy as a whole.

The second major part of the internship was my mini project on ethinyl estradiol. Ethinyl estradiol is a synthetic estrogen that is commonly found in birth control pills. Studies have shown that ethinyl estradiol, which has been released into the environment from human waste, has been toxic to aquatic environments. Thus, it's important to see if ethinyl estradiol could have any negative effects on humans who have been exposed to it. To study this, I learned about the mouse's mammary gland and examined different mammary gland samples digitally.

Overall, I had so much fun this summer and was able to learn so much life changing information in just a couple of weeks. I am extremely grateful to the Great Neck Breast Cancer Coalition research program for providing me with an opportunity to learn directly from real scientists such as Dr. Vandenberg and make real impacts in the field of breast cancer. A big thanks to Dr. Vandenberg for guiding and teaching me this summer. This is an experience that I'll never forget.