Testimonials from Interns at RestoreFX 2014

VS

My experience at Restore Fx was a valuable one, the experience and information learned, will be something I take with me as I pursue a degree in psychology. I learned to score a variety of psychological tests the program required patients to take every week. At first, the packets seemed so tedious and like they would never end but eventually entering in the data only took minutes. After I learned what the purpose of the tests were data entry more interesting because you could monitor each patient’s progress through the program. My favorite part of my time at Restore Fx was being able to sit in on family therapies.

I like the mission statement and what the program stands for, to restore daily function of individuals with chronic pain from a holistic and whole body approach. It’s very evident that people who suffer from chronic pain, are not the only ones who have to learn to cope, the family is also impacted. I got to sit on family therapy Thursday nights with Azure, and it was a neat experience seeing the patient’s family be brought in and presented with coping strategies. By changing the relationship the patient has with pain and combatting that pain with persistent physical therapy and mindfulness/counseling, the program helped many people right before my eyes. One patient in particular, came to the program with a fused spine and after that surgery the only way she could walk was at a 90 degree angle, hunched over basically with her chest parallel to the floor. It was evident she was in a lot of pain, and she let everyone around her know that as well. As she progressed week to week she was able to walk more upright then the doctor told her she would ever be able to and with a couple accommodations she was able to pick up a hobby she thought she would never be able to do again, golf. All thanks to the program. Seeing these small victories in the patients’ lives were so rewarding even though I was only an intern, and I very much enjoyed playing my small role in those victories.

Often, I found myself coming in early and staying a bit later, either because I was in the middle of something but really didn’t mind or because I had nothing going on at home and wanted to stay later. Everyone there was so friendly and I am so thankful for this exposure into a setting of a real life psychologists. This experience confirmed to me I was pursuing a degree in the right field. It can be so intimidating as a student, we pick a major based on the subjects we liked at our public high school and we spend all this money taking college classes hoping we are headed in the right direction but because of this internship, I know for certain I am working towards a degree in a great field.

JC

RestoreFX offered great opportunities to see the daily activities of psychologists, patients and the interworking of a pain clinic. The group sessions and the opportunities to discuss the triumphs and troubles the psychologists faced throughout their career were some of my favorite experiences.

AJ

My time as an intern at Restore FX has been a valuable, enriching experience. I enjoyed the warm environment of the staff and the their quickness to help us with any questions we had. One aspect I particularly enjoyed was sitting in on the patient evaluations. This felt like the closest I could come to being in a therapy session, which is what I hope to do in my future career. It was a very unique opportunity to be able to sit in on patient describing their history and struggles and be able to be a part of that vulnerable, raw experience with them.

Sitting in on group therapy was another aspect I enjoyed during this internship. It was interesting the see the different dynamics that played out in the groups as new patients came and interacted with the patients who had been there longer. It was fascinating to notice how the addition of just one new person could entirely change the dynamic of the group, and bring patients who had been quiet out of their shell and participate more. I also enjoyed being able to see the patient’s progression from starting the program to leaving the program and seeing not only their physical progress with their pain intensity and mobility, but their psychological and cognitive progress. It was inspiring to see patients who were extremely motivated and working hard to do the exercises to help their pain as well as work on their self-defeating mental patterns.

 Additionally, It was a humbling experience to realize that many topics the patients were talking about, I could in some capacity completely relate to. This reminded me of our common humanity and the similar struggles we all face.

JA

During the summer of 2014 I worked as an intern at Restore FX, a chronic pain clinic located in Austin, TX. Since it is my goal to pursue an education in clinical psychology, the different activities and duties I was able to witness and perform while at Restore FX, have been an important experience. By understanding chronic pain as a problem with a biopsychosocial origin, the treatment provided to patients is able to encompass all aspects of life that have been negatively affected by chronic pain and improve them, having as an ultimate goal the reduction of pain and restoration of normal function that will allow patients to go back to work, and perform their regular activities to the best of their capabilities.

During my internship, I was able to witness the extent of this treatment. Through physical therapy, patients are encouraged to explore the limits of what their bodies can do and with the assistance of professional therapists, many achieve improved mobility in just four weeks. The same is also true for the Yoga and Pilates classes, which include relaxation techniques for further improvement.

Furthermore, the inclusion of psychological treatments such as mindfulness, individual and family therapies allows the reduction of negative affects that usually accompany chronic pain such as anxiety and depression. Some of the most meaningful experiences that I had in my education while working at the clinic include assisting with group therapies by providing real life examples of mindfulness techniques for focusing attention on present stimuli instead of distractions that may encourage pain related thoughts; encourage positive thoughts among the group that lead away from catastrophizing thoughts; administered instruments that measure psychological constructs related to chronic pain such as the Beck anxiety and depression inventories, Tampa scale of kinesiophobia, coping skills questionnaire, and others; entered patient data into the clinic’s database for storage and further research; and assisted with office related tasks in order to help daily administrative activities.

As a Spanish speaking student, I was also able to work as a translator and assist individual patients throughout their day at the clinic. This not only gave me another opportunity to witness treatment procedures but it also allowed me to develop a closer relationship with the patients and better understand their thoughts, personalities, and attitudes towards life which I would not have been able to see otherwise.

KS

I have a better idea of what people with chronic pain must go through and the struggles they must overcome to get better. The staff is friendly and helpful and the work environment is professional yet relaxed and conflict-free. It is great to see the patients transform from frustrated and closed off at the start of the program to hopeful, happy, and social towards the end; their true personalities shine through as they make friends and they’re able to cope with the pain from what they have learned in the program. I love participating in yoga and pilates as well as group therapy and seeing the patients interacting. This experience has given me a further look into what my future career will be like, and I am so grateful for the opportunity. This has helped me decide which part of the psychology field I want to work in so I will be happy with my choice. Without this experience, I would probably not have been able to get a closer look into various jobs involved in the psychological field and be not as confident about my future.

LL

On my first day, I was greeted by the staff who introduced me to all the patients currently enrolled in the program. Everyone was so welcoming! The majority of the patients were very talkative and it was so interesting to hear about their stories. What I love about Restore is that they use psychological and physical therapy alongside yoga, pilates etc. for rehabilitation. During my first week I was required to be a “patient for the day”. I went to physical therapy, group therapy, mindfulness and yoga as if I was an actual patient in the program. At the beginning of the summer there was a lot of tedious, typical intern work that I had to do, which I actually didn’t mind. I learned how to score psychological tests and even got to sort through some physical and occupational therapy files. Once I got the hang of everything I was able to observe the physical therapists, which was by far my favorite part of my time here. I got to observe a patient that had severe scoliosis and see his home exercise program working to strengthen his core. I was able to observe multiple evaluations week by week, which was so cool to see how much each patient was improving each week. I also got to observe some occupational therapy and even help some patients with resumes. Also, towards the end of the semester I was able to start attending staff meetings, where the doctors, physical therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists came together. It was so interesting to learn more about each patient, their condition and their improvements. It also made me feel more a part of the program. Every single one of the staff has been so nice and generous. I just want to thank everyone for giving me the time to be a part of such a great program, I have learned so much this summer and really appreciate this opportunity I was given.

AK

I can’t begin to describe how awesome it has been to be able to work for Restore Fx. I first applied to intern here because I heard it was about restoring functions to people with chronic pain. This was interesting to me because my mother broke her back a few years back, and has been living with chronic pain for most of my life. I came into the program as an intern not knowing what to expect. But as I went through the program, I was able to be a “patient for the day” and learn about all of the exercises, which includes yoga, pilates, group therapy. Through this program the doctors hear have set up treatment plans for their patients which can help with tracking how well they are doing in the program and what they can do to make them better. After I was a patient for the day, I was taught how to score psychological tests! My mind was blown when I learned about how to score actual tests like the McGill Pain, PAIRS, TSK, CPAQ etc… to help with the patient plans. Not only did I score these tests, but I felt like I was a part of the whole team here and not just an intern. Every day I would come in and do a lot of different things, like entering and scoring psych tests, treatment plans and then all of the information into a database. On the side, I would do work for Dr. Jordan, such as helping her print out articles pertaining to psychology disorders and reading up on chronic pain so that I could add my own personal input into the group therapies with the patients that attended. I’ve learned a lot about chronic pain and how to help someone with chronic pain manage their everyday lives with a little less stress and a little more happiness. This opportunity has not only helped me in my career path, but also my own personal life. After attending some of the nutrition portions of the program, as well as group therapy, I was able to apply the information I was learning to the way I was living my own life. Restore Fx has changed me as a person because of how put together this program is and how informative it is. I have had a wonderful experience this summer as an intern work with Jean, Gemma, Keisha, Dr. Jordan, Marg and all of the other interns at Restore Fx and I plan on coming back in the near future to this great environment.

BC

My time at Restore Fx this summer has been an invaluable experience that will assist me in accomplishing my career goals of becoming a clinical health psychologist. During the summer, I was able to gain a direct experience with clinical psychological care by observing group therapies, mindfulness groups and behavioral health evaluations for new patients. I learned from Dr. Krista Jordan and Margaret Martin about the importance of chronic pain and psychological well-being from the group therapies. Furthermore, I learned the benefits of mindfulness for chronic pain and psychological well-being in mindfulness groups led by Dr. Sara Griesemer. I hope to implement what I have learned from these groups in my future career as a clinical health psychologist.

Not only was I able to professionally engage with the staff members and patients, I was able to learn more about Restore Fx by managing the front desk, updating the database with new patient information, and conducting research for the staff to provide up-to-date articles on new treatments for chronic pain. Attending staff meetings was also a valuable experience because I was able to hear the different aspects of patient care from each department within Restore Fx. This allowed me to gain a more holistic view of each patient’s treatment plan and how each department is interconnected to ensure the optimal care of each patient. I also learned about the different assessments that are utilized to measure patients’ psychological well-being throughout the program such as the Beck Depression Inventory and the Beck Anxiety Inventory. This knowledge will assist me when continuing my education in a clinical psychology doctoral program.

During my internship at Restore Fx, I was able to share my own experiences of living with a disability. I discussed how viewing an injury and chronic pain as disabling can make one feel powerless when they encounter challenges. However, if one is able to change their cognitive standpoint to an “abled” mindset, they will begin to feel empowered and can start to accommodate their lives to accomplish their personal and career goals.

I feel my experience at Restore Fx has given me the assurance of knowing clinical health psychology is the field I plan to pursue for my doctoral degree. The Restore Fx staff members were always willing to sharing their knowledge and experience with the interns this summer. I learned substantially more at Restore Fx with a hands-on experience in clinical psychological care than in a classroom setting. I would highly recommend Restore Fx for future students who desire to pursue a career in the clinical psychology or in the healthcare industry.

FL

I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work here, as an intern, at Restore FX. The experience exceeded my initial expectations of what I thought I would be doing here. When I first got the job, I assumed that as an intern all I would be doing would be faxing, scanning, filing – normal intern/office type duties. However, on the first day of our orientation, we learned that we would actually get to participate in some of the psychological tools used here. For instance, we got to sit in on group therapy with the patients, where we not only observed how to conduct/ lead a group therapy session but also got to talk with the patients and hear their stories. Another, one of our every day was to score the psych evaluations of each patient. To do this we learned how to score each test and Dr. Jordan was kind enough to offer to explain the meaning of these scores. Each of us got the chance to take an MMPI-2 test and have Dr. Jordan go over it with us. The staff here at RestoreFX has been nothing but kind and welcoming. Everyone was willing to help if I had any questions about how to work the database or the copier, or anything else I may have gotten confused about, Dr. Jordan and Jean especially. After spending the summer here, I feel like I’ve gotten a firmer grasp on what it is like to go into a psychology profession and it has reaffirmed by desire to go into the field as well. I really enjoyed the testing aspect of this job and I look forward into diving more heavily into that as I go further in my psychology career. Overall, my experience here at RestoreFX has been great and I am very thankful that I got the chance to work here.

IG

During this Fall 2014 semester I had the privilege of interning at Restore FX, a Physical Therapy Office for patients who suffer from chronic pain. It was an amazing experience and I am grateful to have had this opportunity, especially coming from a small town where there are not many physical therapy offices that incorporate psychological therapy as well as nutritional dieting. It was very eye opening to see the change that the patients went through in just a four-week period of therapy. Being a psychology major, my interest was in the group and family therapy sessions and I tried to participate in them as much as I could. I believe that this internship definitely benefited me in my journey towards becoming a psychologist. I experienced many positive learning opportunities throughout this internship, some of which included learning how chronic pain affects a person’s behavior and interpreting psychological evaluation scores.

When I began this internship, I did not know what to expect. My first day was exciting and nerve-racking at the same time. However, I quickly adapted to the new environment and felt like I belonged there. I particularly enjoyed the group therapy sessions because it was interesting to watch the therapist interact with these groups of such diverse individuals. Most patients had really different personalities but it was nice to see them help each other out during the sessions because at the end of the day, their main goal was to achieve a better life while dealing with their chronic pain.

All in all, this internship was a wonderful experience that I will always remember. Dr. Jordan, Jean, and the rest of the staff at Restore FX are an amazing group of people and I felt privileged to work with them even if it was just for a brief amount of time. They helped me whenever I had questions and I truly appreciated that. As I continue my psychology education, I will remember what I learned and try to apply it to as many situations as I can. I also cannot wait to be able to pay this opportunity forward and hopefully have an intern working at my office one day.

NC

Interning at Restore Fx has been a memorable experience. I have gained all kinds of knowledge throughout this experience that will help influence my future career choice. At Restore, I learned how to administer, score and evaluate patients’ psychological assessments. By doing so, I became more familiar with office programs like Microsoft Excel and Q Local 2. I found this highly beneficial due to my lack of knowledge in the office setting.

As beneficial as the office work was, I seemed to focus more of my attention on shadowing the psychologists. I participated in Group and Family Therapy weekly, which allowed me to fully understand how these kinds of therapies take place. Psychologists prepared themselves ahead of time and then discussed the topics of interest among the patients.

Later in the semester, I was presented with the opportunity to “sit in” on a patient evaluation. During the evaluations, patients would provide their background information, specifically, the instance in which they received their chronic pain. By participating in the evaluations, I was able to understand the patient first hand. This allowed me to become closely connected to the patients, which made the experience more enlightening.

Overall, Restore Fx was a very laid back environment. I was able to complete my office work and still have remaining time for homework. The most fulfilling part of this internship was watching the patients graduate with an understanding of how to lead a functional life with their chronic pain. The majority of the patients in the program benefitted from it and I am thankful that I had an opportunity to be a part of it.

WM

This internship provided me with such amazing experiences. There were so many outlets for learning during my time there and I could not be any happier with the escalated level of appreciation I gained towards my own level of health by being submersed in a chronic pain setting. Staffed in the facility are psychologists, physical therapists (and assistants), an occupational therapist, yoga instructor, Pilates instructor, behavioral health specialist and an on-site medical director.

One of the most influential portions of my time devoted there was observing the interactions between the professions as they collaborated together towards the progression of their patients. I was astounded to see their high level of professionalism and courtesy towards each other while also seeing their welcoming, and occasional, quirkiness. They go to wonderful lengths to ensure the comfort of their interns and made my time there quite a pleasure. Even upon completion of the internship, I continued to work there as a volunteer intern because of my affinity for the program.

I found the patient population to be very different from any other population I have had the opportunity to observe. This is because chronic pain is an entirely different beast to tackle than standards rehabilitation for a broken leg or a patient with depression. Observations of the health care provider to patient interactions really helped affirm my affinity for physical therapy while also complementing my vast interests in psychology. Admittedly, I had minimal expectations towards the implementation of yoga and mindfulness in the treatment process for these patients. However, I was very surprised to find, first hand and via observations, how therapeutic it actually was. Now, I firmly understand why they are incorporated into the program and I realize why such strong correlates of improvements are present in conjunction with chronic pain patients.

Again, my time at RestoreFX was phenomenal and I appreciated all of the experiences and learning I have acquired during my time there. The staff is amazing, knowledgeable, and welcoming. Upon arrival, some patients are kind and some are frustrated, but upon completion, all of them are grateful and affirming. My fellow interns were also influential and provided me with other outlets of learning and proved to be great to work with. Our internship professor at Texas State University is also to thank because she has definitely gone above and beyond in making this internship a possibility an amazing experience.

KB

Being fascinated by the Physical Therapy career, I have a great interest in exploring different aspects of it whether it’s pediatrics, geriatrics, inpatient or outpatient. However, this Medical Research Internship has opened my eyes to a whole different side: the Psychology of Physical Therapy. I am so amazed at how this program doesn’t only do PT to treat a patient for their injury; it incorporates a variety of therapies for the patients including OT, Group Therapy, Family Therapy, Pilates, Yoga, and more.

The positive atmosphere at the clinic established a wonderful learning environment. Every single person I met, I learned something new from, helping me expanding my knowledge in many directions and adding to my curiosity in the field. They were always willing to answer any questions I had, or tell me more about a certain topic I was enthusiastic about.

As an intern, I really enjoyed being in a clinic that works with such a unique population. These patients were all injured at work somehow and dealt with chronic pain. Because of this, I became more educated about Worker’s Compensation and how these patients are greatly affected by it. Even though I am not a chronic patient myself, attending the therapies allowed me to have my own set of skills to use in life. Because of Group Therapy, I now have my very own coping skills that I can utilize whenever I face stress, pain, or fear. Yoga has taught me how to become more aware of my body and proper breathing techniques. Mindfulness has taught me about learning to “live in the moment.” But most of all, the patients have taught me an important lesson about life: to see its beauty even through the pain and difficult circumstances.

Getting to know these patients was very important to me and made my experience more genuine. Whether it was discussing different topics during therapy or eating together during lunch, I enjoyed learning more about them because they each had a unique story to tell. Because I am bilingual, I was able to connect with both English and Spanish speaking patients. My culture also allowed me to establish a common ground with some of these patients, making our conversations more in depth and relatable. I also noticed that Spanish-speaking patients don’t get the same experience as someone who doesn’t have any language barriers. For instance, at the end of Yoga, the stories Ricky tells us are not translated. Therefore, I am gladly working on a Yoga CD for the Spanish-speaking patients so that they, too, have the opportunity to get the full feel of the Yoga session.
 All in all, this Biopsychosocial Medical Research has taught me a multitude of things about life. It made me uncover an aspect of Physical Therapy I had never seen before. Because of this phenomenal experience at Restore FX, I have been inspired to incorporate a holistic background when I practice as a Physical Therapist myself one day.

IJ

I have learned more from this internship about the nature of holistic patient care then I really expected to learn. It is incredible to me how much I have learned we take for granted when we are happy, as well as all the opportunities and potential we have. I don’t think that I would have learned this by reading a textbook, human interaction was completely necessary for me to see first-hand how psychotherapy works.

I think this internship will really help me in my career because it reinforced what I want to study, which goes along the humanistic approach, incorporated with healthy life style habits such as good nutrition, exercise, yoga, Pilates, and meditation. This experienced really made me think a lot about how amazing our minds and bodies are as well as how we need to take care of them to our best possibility. Chronic pain and anxiety are two human experiences that seem like extreme struggles that take the best possible HOLLISTIC care to really begin overcoming the effect these conditions have on the lives of individuals.

Yoga and Pilates were always challenging and fun, I liked experiencing how different instructors had completely different methods and ways of interacting with the patients. The Pilates teacher was really calm and focused on perfecting everyone’s pose hands on, I remember a lot of patients saying how they trusted her even when they didn’t trust their own bodies. After Pilates class everyone was very relaxed and seemed much stronger. The yoga instructor on the other hand was very good at telling wise stories during class, she was very funny and also would praise the class when we were doing something well which made people feel good about themselves and inspired them to work a little harder.

It’s really amazing how many people I saw transform, especially when it comes to peoples mindset. Of course it wasn’t a continuous steady upward progress but overall I absolutely saw a difference in peoples level of confidence. The patients especially were fond of the mindfulness techniques that Margaret teaches. I think that was one of the most important life lessons for any human to learn. We can loose ourselves in our thoughts about the future and the past and when we do that we give up the freedom and power we have in the present moment. It’s important to be aware of how our mind works and how to control it to a certain level instead of letting it think whatever it wants to think.

This has definitely changed my life in a very positive and productive way. It has taught me a lot about myself, about others in chronic pain, about holistic care, and about the people who work in this field. It was an experience I will always remember and keep in mind when I make future choices about my career.