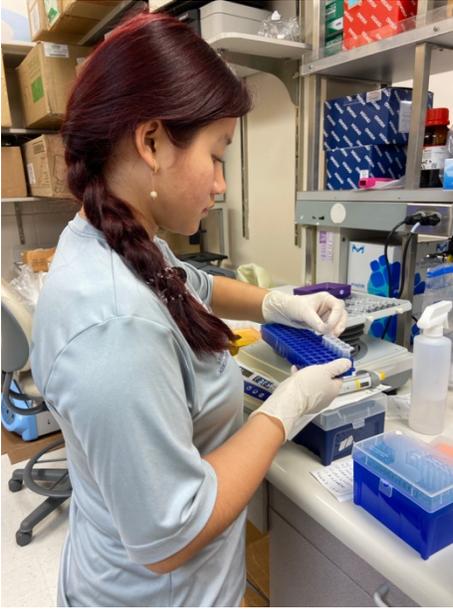


## Glenda Bong



I aspire to become an anesthesiologist. I became interested in anesthesiology when I met nurse anesthetists at the University of North Florida (UNF). They showed us how they treat patients. I was intrigued at how they are able to relieve patients' pain making them comfortable even during the most stressful situations. To further my career aspirations, I applied to the Mayo Clinic SPARK Program. I remember telling Ms. Dee about getting into SPARK. I was nervous at first because I didn't want it to seem as though I was abandoning the AnnieRuth's program, especially because I love the lessons that I learned from the business seminars. Luckily, after explaining the situation, Ms. Dee extended an invitation for me to complete my internship experience at Mayo so that I could receive pay for the hours that I would work at

Mayo Clinic. *If I had stayed nervous and never communicated properly, then I would've missed out on the amazing opportunity of experiencing the AnnieRuth Foundation's summer portion.*

During the SPARK program, I was placed in Dr. Adi Narayana Kunamneni's laboratory to conduct antibody research to treat chronic neuropathic pain. In the lab, I get hands on experience and get to conduct the experiments directly. The main project that I am working on is characterizing antibodies that are antagonists to the cholecystikinin B receptor (CCKBR). CCKBR is upregulated in chronic neuropathic pain (pain that stems from hypersensitivity of the nerves) and is present throughout many areas of the body. Some skills that I learned were how to pipette properly, how to grow and monitor E. coli, how to test the size and expression of antibodies, and how to purify proteins. Throughout this project, I also helped my mentor (Dr. Kunamneni) with his project on antibodies to treat liver cancer. I went through most of the same steps as the chronic pain project since he wanted me to get extra practice with lab skills. While I did learn how to perform lab procedures, I also learned why we did the procedures and how they would work. For example, Western blots test the expression of antibodies and protein purification isolates the desired antibody. One of my favorite parts of my internship is that my lab advisor, Christian, teaches in analogies. I once asked him why we used milk in Western blots, and he explained it by using my red hair as an example. His analogies make concepts very easy to understand. He also gives me very good lectures and life lessons. I was taking photos of my friend doing her project for the SPARK Album, and he explained how important it is to take meaningful pictures. Honestly, I think I'll remember his life lessons and his analogies forever.

The AnnieRuth Foundation's summer internship program taught me how to grasp the interest of potential employers in business interviews, which definitely contributed to my

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acceptance into the Mayo Clinic SPARK Program. I learned it is very important to do research on where you are applying to. I never knew that a potential employer could quiz you about their workplace, so luckily the mentors taught me that because Dr. Kunamneni did ask me questions about his own research. I'm also very grateful that the program emphasized asking questions. I remember someone said that if you ask questions, the person will remember you. In my case, I asked Dr. Kunamneni many questions during the interview, and I later found out that out of all interviewees, I was the only one that asked him questions, so he *did* remember me. I also value the fact that the program taught me to communicate with others. I am so grateful for the resources that the program gives us, such as weekly meetings with medical professionals. That way, we can build more connections and inquire more about the future to seize as many opportunities as we can. In fact, I used to be shy whenever my mother would bring me around her doctor friends and would tell me to "ask questions." I'm so thankful that the program helped me get out of my comfort zone so I can be able to build connections properly. One of the girls in my lab is a medical student, and my lab advisor brought her to me and said to "ask her questions." Instead of being nervous or shy, I befriended her and asked her about her studies, career aspirations, work experience, etc. I learned from her that working in a research lab could give you an advantage when applying to residency programs, especially if you have a publication.

By participating in the AnnieRuth Foundation's summer internship program, I was able to gain and maximize such amazing opportunities, which I am very thankful for.