This past summer, I had the privilege to intern at MergerWatch in New York City. MergerWatch is a small organization made up of three fierce women committed to social justice and change. The part of MergerWatch that I worked with was Raising Women’s Voices, which deals with the issues that surround health care and making sure that women everywhere receive the healthcare that they deserve. Raising Women’s voices is an organization about action and using women’s stories about their experiences with healthcare in the healthcare reform debate. With the new passing of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), Raising Women’s Voices recognizes now more than ever the importance of letting the general public know what is going on and how women can take advantage of the benefits in the bill. What Raising Women’s Voices also does is take the bill, and any updates on it, and translates into simple English that everyone can understand as opposed to only people with a legal degree. That was only the work portion; however, in this final report I am going to attempt to try to collect my thoughts about the summer that really impacted my life.

I applied to the Reproductive Rights Activist Service Corps because I believe not just in reproductive right for everyone but also because I wanted to do something about the attacks that reproductive rights were receiving in the past year. Like other interns at MergerWatch, I am studying to go into medical school and wanted to learn more about the other side of healthcare. I went into the internship with the knowledge that there were inequalities in the healthcare that people receive, but I didn’t realize to what extent. After reading the testimonies that women gave about their healthcare (and lack of healthcare) I was appalled. I am privileged enough to have great health insurance through my father, through his laborer’s union, so I never had to worry
about costs and which doctors I could go to for care. However, listening to these women’s stories, it really sunk in that it was not the case with all women, especially when it came to light that many women weren’t getting the care that they needed because insurance companies simply wanted to “save money.” However, I should also point out that my studies at Hampshire and the other five colleges prepared me for the grunt work of the organization but it didn’t prepare me for everything.

At Raising Women’s Voices, I was one of two interns for the summer, both of us undergrads, both of us equally confused about healthcare reform and what that meant. However, being an intern at an organization that tells women what is in the healthcare reform bill in simple English, this just wasn’t going to do. So, my first week at Raising Women’s voices involved reading a lot of news articles, researching all of the terms and then translating the language used in the terms, reading more articles about the bill, reading portions of the bill itself, and then sitting down and taking it all in. My work at the organization involved sitting in front of a computer and updating a twitter account that the organization had, a facebook page, and writing blog posts about all of the “activity” that was going on regarding the PPACA. However, what was really inspiring and a crucial part of the internship were the “mini” fieldtrips that we took. I was able to attend a social-justice conference that wasn’t at all what I expected it to be. When I heard the words “Social Justice Conference” I envisioned something like the CLPP conference, but instead, it was a conference that was full of health care leaders, as well as officials from New York City and other states all coming together to learn more about what they can do to help start change. It was something that was really moving and I was truly glad to be given the chance to attend that to see yet another side of what social justice means to people.
Throughout the internship, I was fortunate enough to go along with the “big boss” to many of her meetings with other organizations regarding issues that were common for all of us. This came in the form of many, many conference calls and notes on said conference calls, but also going to a meeting at the Planned Parenthood in lower Manhattan and actually getting to meet social justice leaders. These meetings were great because they really gave me insight into how the organizations worked and how those connections were made and maintained. Some other highlights included learning a little bit more about how healthcare reform lead to other important debates, such as the one for paid sick leave in New York City. I attended a public event that had a message from Michelle Obama and various New York City officials talking about what steps are being taken to ensure that New York City got paid sick leave. Again, this was great because I was able to talk with and listen to other leaders for healthcare reform and paid sick leave.

In terms of my duties in the office, along with the social networking, I was also fortunate enough to produce one last, large project that I felt really proud of. This final project was the “how-to” packet that the other intern, Taylor, and I worked on. It included a “how-to” guide on creating a college event to inform young people about healthcare reform, a list of frequently asked questions and how they can answer them, and a little confidence booster that I wanted to add in. The project involved looking up, confirming, then reading other articles regarding specific aspects of the PPACA bill that affected young people to make sure that everything was correct. I came across many different articles and at times I admit it was hard to read what each of them were saying, but my supervisor Eesha was always there to help guide me in the right direction. It also meant a lot since I really wanted to offer advice to any college student who wanted to take on the daunting task of informing their peers about health care reform and to
provide them with all the advice that I wish I was given. Through sweat and lots of re-edits, the other intern and I were able to come up with a final product that was - while not 100% finished - something that the whole office was excited about. This was the project that I felt the most proud of; that, along with the Brown Bag Lunches that I was responsible for putting together.

This summer, I was the one responsible for putting together the RRASC Summer Brown Bag lunch series. Overall, I was able to get six organizations to do the Brown Bag lunches, which were set to be a place for the interns in the area to go around and learn what each organization was doing. Through these Brown Bag lunches, the other interns and I were able to learn about many different things, from as abortion techniques to legal advice that women could receive, to health care reform that many of us had no idea about. For anyone else who wants to put together the brown bag lunches, I recommend to be kind and straight to the point, and even if one organization doesn’t get back to you, be persistent. Persistence is something that really pays off since a lot of times organizations are super busy, but if you really want them to be interested, you have to show them that you are interested in them.

Overall, my experience at Mergerwatch was one that was great, it was something that really helped me on my path to going to medical school, but also about learning more about the human element. I feel so blessed to be given this life-changing internship that was great, although rocky and isolating at times, but without all the ups and downs, it really wouldn’t be the same. My advice to future interns would be to be confident in yourself and your abilities and to really come to everything with an open mind. In the office, as advice to a future intern, what I didn’t do was be straightforward with what I wanted to get out of the internship. I wasn’t sure exactly what it was that I wanted and floated around a lot of ideas that in the end, only served to
hurt me since I didn’t get all that I wanted to get out of the internship. New York City is a wonderful place to be in - take it all in, one step at a time!