PSI General Profile Competition
Winning entry by:
Céline, I3Statprobe

From Malakoff…

I come from a suburban city near Paris and have lived there all my life. After I graduated from high school in 2001, I started with a degree in Maths, Economics, and IT to move on two years after towards Econometrics, and finally, to statistics. I graduated in 2007 from a school of statistics and economics in France, with the equivalent of an MSc in Statistics.

During my last year of studies, I had the chance to work part time for a French electricity provider as an intern. While I was at school three days a week learning everything about statistical modeling, I would spend the rest of the time dealing with SAS databases and forecasting electricity consumption. Needless to say, after those 6 years, I did not know much about the pharmaceutical industry. I really enjoyed working for this energy company. The months I spent there allowed me to put the little SAS skills we got from school into practice, and to get an idea of what it is like to work with real data.

But as graduation was approaching, I did not feel like going on in this path and started to look for other opportunities. Biostatistics had been in my mind for a few years, so I started to gather some information about clinical trials and about statistics in the industry more specifically and I soon felt like it corresponded more to the kind of work I was looking to perform. From a statistical (and strictly personal) point of view I enjoyed the most working with data about individual people, and I was interested in pharmaceutical data in general.

….. to Maidenhead

I chose to get into the CRO world and joined i3 Statprobe in late October 2007 based at their offices in Maidenhead, UK. For someone who wanted some change, I was well served: new country, different language, new job, new industry. The first couple of weeks were more or less devoted to training. They involved getting familiar with the company's procedures, along with small meetings with members of different teams, from project management, to data entry and of course, biostatistics.

In the first couple of days I was also assigned to my very first study, in which I would be involved from start to finish under senior biostatistician supervision. It started with the design of the randomization scheme. I then participated in the CRF review. From a statistical point of view, it involved checking the CRF against the protocol to ensure that the data collected at each visit is correct and that all primary and secondary endpoints were included as indicated in the protocol. After that, I could move to writing the Statistical Analysis Plan (SAP), which was then signed off by our client in March. The first patients have been enrolled a few weeks ago, and I am currently working with statistical programmers on requirements documents that will be followed by the whole team when SAS programming will start at the beginning of May.

In the meantime, I was assigned to other projects, to assist some more SAP writing, but mostly as a statistical programmer. This is an opportunity to be introduced to other therapeutical areas as well as a good way to get a better understanding of other statistics related tasks. By using other people's SAPs or requirements documents, or simply by programming it gives me a better idea of how I should present my own future documents. And it is a great team work experience as well. It is very exciting to work with people from very different backgrounds and levels. Coming from a team of 5 people in which I was known as "the SAS/Stats girl", it is really life changing for me. It is just very nice to know that whatever issue you might have, you will find someone who will be able to help you. I really feel like I can benefit from other people's experiences, and that is really appreciable.

After these first 6 months, I would say that I do not regret my move. This is only the beginning, but today I feel like I made the right choice for several reasons. As we are dealing with human data, this industry is highly regulated, and the matter of respecting those regulations is always in mind. Everything needs to be planned and well documented, and extreme care is taken to ensure that the data and results produced are accurate and every output is thoroughly reviewed by the team. Each industry is different, and it is understandable that working with a database containing millions of customers is very different from having to deal with thousands of patients. But from a personal point of view, I feel very comforted by the idea that any anomaly or missing data can be further investigated.

I am also pleased with the variety of tasks that are available. From SAP writing to programming, I also enjoy working on projects from different therapeutical areas and phases. I have mainly worked on phase II respiratory studies and on a phase IV cardiovascular study, and judging by the ongoing projects of the team, there are still plenty of opportunities.

Since it is my first experience, I cannot really compare how it is to work for a CRO or for a pharmaceutical company. But always having the client's satisfaction in mind is surely challenging, and adds a share of diversity to the day to day work and is a good way to learn how to be more flexible, and to increase relationship skills.

I am looking forward to the rest of my career, and really encourage anyone searching for diversity to join this industry!

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