



## Interview with IAFNS Summer Research Opportunity Fellow Matt Selby

This Transcript has been edited for clarity and length.

### **IAFNS:**

Thank you for joining us today. Tell us a bit about yourself and how you heard about IAFNS.

### **Matt Selby**

My name is Matt Selby, I am going into my second year of graduate school at Rutgers University in New Jersey. I'm in the Nutritional Sciences program. This follows from my lifetime interest in nutrition. I entered graduated school following many years of work in research. I have a background in human physiology and biochemistry from the University of Oregon as an undergraduate. I spent three years working in research after that. And some members of the faculty in the nutritional sciences program are very familiar with IAFNS, and so when a summer Fellowship opportunity came up to work with IAFNS, that was strongly recommended by faculty. And so I figured, I'm not taking classes over the summer, just doing research I had time to take on a part-time fellowship as well.

### **IAFNS**

Can you tell us about your project?

### **Matt Selby**

The purpose of my project was to communicate current dietary guidelines regarding fat consumption to the lay public. We want to curate the current guidelines and the current research supporting those guidelines. And we want to put it all together for healthcare professionals, such as nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners are a highly trusted member of the community. They are highly educated and they are perfectly capable of engaging with primary literature and interpreting results and giving actionable advice to the public. Originally, the scope of the project was simply let's identify some common misconceptions that people have about fats and health, and let's answer them and put it together in a way that is helpful for nurse practitioners. What it ultimately expanded to, because I just can't leave things simple, is a tool, a live and interactive presentation that nurse practitioners can engage with. And then, I also had the opportunity to write a paper for *Nutrition Today*.

### **IAFNS**

How can we improve our outreach to health care practitioners?

**Matt Selby**

Part of my project was getting the ball rolling on working with health care professionals, such as nurse practitioners. At the beginning of the summer, I actually did a few interviews with some nurse practitioners. What struck me was they recognized that nutrition was a blind spot in their education, and they were highly motivated to seek further education opportunities. In many states, nurse practitioners and registered dietitians and other healthcare workers need to earn Continuing Education credits, where you can attend a lecture or read a paper from *Nutrition Today* or write a paper yourself. By earning those, you can maintain your license and continue to practice. We decided that it was a very exciting opportunity to take everything I worked on and make that into a continuing education tool. One exciting opportunity for IAFNS is the ability to continue offering those credits, but the idea I had was, why not talk directly with them? What I recognized as a valuable opportunity was the need to provide a platform for nurses to ask those questions. What changes to the IAFNS website would allow nurse practitioners and other healthcare workers to submit questions and get informed responses? Are there changes that would allow IAFNS to be a trusted partner, full of credentialed and educated professionals to answer questions?

**IAFNS**

Have you come across people from academia, industry, and government this summer, and if so, how has that helped you in your journey?

**Matt Selby**

I take a broad overview. Bringing together academia, industry and government so that there's better collaborations and better dissemination of information really excited me. I have met several people from industry and government and even other academics who I wouldn't have met otherwise. Additionally, I met members of IAFNS' Scientific Leadership Council. My view of science has evolved. I prided myself on engaging with other materials prior to grad school. And so, I thought that I had a broad view of what was going on in science. But now, I realize that I have a very limited view. And I now see that there's a lot of different people in a lot of fields pursuing human health and promoting wellness and making it so that the public can access information regarding health, and then also access products that can promote overall wellness and public health.

**IAFNS**

What are your goals for graduate school and what advice do you have for future IAFNS Fellows?

**Matt Selby**

My goal with the rest of grad school is to finish my research, obviously. Quick aside on that, I work in a basic science lab studying lipid metabolism, specifically, how a protein called SCD desaturated saturated fats and the effect this has on lipid metabolism, immunity, and even cancer risk. So, I'm continuing on with basic science research. But, my experience with IAFNS reminded me that I do have a passion for working with people, communicating science, and especially communicating science related to medicine and nutrition. And so I'm now adding in a registered dietitian training component to my overall education. So, by the time I graduate, I will be a registered dietitian. I will have the ability to work with people

and continuing doing basic research, which is really what I wanted all along. But I needed an opportunity like this, to remind me that that was what I really care about. In terms of advice for other students, I would say, you will get out of this experience what you put in. Like I said, the original goal of this project was to simply identify a few questions that seem salient to the public and then answer them. And I could have just done that. I could have just made a Prezi presentation and be done in like a few weeks. But I was really excited by the opportunities that I recognized with this. I didn't have to interview those nurse practitioners. I didn't have to write a paper for *Nutrition Today*. But those were things that were valuable to me. And those were things that expanded on some skills already I already had and gave me the opportunity to practice some skills I wanted to have. And by just saying, yes, let's not just do the basics, and being willing to put in a little bit of extra work, it ended up being such a valuable experience. The incredible support I received from IAFNS throughout this experience, made all those extra things I did possible. If you want to do some extra work the sky's the limit and you're going to get a lot of great support from IAFNS, and they will make sure that you're able to do things in a timely manner. They will provide the resources and expertise that you need to really support whatever project you take on yourself.

### **IAFNS**

Thank you Matt. We are thrilled to have worked with you this summer. And we wish you all the best.