

Fellowship experience at WOAHSRR-SEA:

From LAB to collABoration

My experience at the World Organisation for Animal Health was completely different from my normal day-to-day activities as a veterinary diagnostician in the Philippines. In my workplace, I work independently and have a structured day that revolves around sample processing in the morning and histopathology slide reading in the afternoon. I would also be doing some microbiology and parasitology work. However, it was a completely different world at WOAHS.

At WOAHS, I was invited to attend various online and physical meetings, conferences, and workshops, which was not a part of my usual routine before this fellowship. At first, it was a little overwhelming, especially because social interaction was not what I was accustomed to at work, but this new environment opened my eyes to how international organizations function, which I only had a vague perception about before.

I have only known WOAHS, then OIE, when our professor in Epidemiology in the University of the Philippines asked us the meaning of the acronym “OIE” for bonus points in one of our laboratory exercises. Since it was in French, I don’t think any of us was able to get the correct answer. From then on, we were encouraged to use information published by WOAHS for disease definition, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment. Little did I know that I would have the opportunity to experience working in one of the offices of WOAHS in the future.

Being a fellow of WOAHS was seeing firsthand how key personnel within the SEA region organize and manage various meetings and workshops on different areas in animal health and welfare, capacity building, and veterinary services. I have also learned various soft skills during my stay with them such as: effective communication, report-writing, teamwork, collaboration, time management, and flexibility to name a few. Moreover, it was my first time to use and create Menti slides for WOAHS meetings and use an AI-powered video summarizer to help the technical staff document several meetings’ discussions, which definitely eased my note-taking role as some of these meetings were held for 2-4 days. Most of all, my knowledge on One Health has not only deepened, but also expanded, as I became involved with WOAHS’s activities on AMR, wildlife, and rabies.

But, the best part of this fellowship was meeting passionate people who save the world in their own ways. With that, I realized that saving the world does not necessarily mean doing extravagant activities for everyone to see, sometimes it is as seemingly mundane as sitting on your chair and attending meetings to coordinate and collaborate.

What's next?

I have returned to my job in the private sector but after I have shared the applicable lessons that I have learned during this fellowship, I am planning to move from private to the public sector. After this fellowship, my views on One Health have definitely expanded and I realized that I could contribute and influence much more if I work outside the private sector.