CATEGORY | Rising Environmental Health Star

WINNER | Jiani Ma

INTRODUCTION

After completing her Master's in Public and Environmental Health in 2016, Jiani Ma successfully applied for a highly sought-after project role working for a public health programme in China. The programme, devised and led by academics in the Public Health department at the University of Birmingham, was in collaboration with the Chinese Guangzhou Centre of Disease Prevention and Control. The project is called: 'CHInese pRimary school children PhYsical activity and DietaRy behAviour chanGe InterventiON' (or CHIRPY DRAGON for short!).

The project Jiani is responsible for is very large and aims to engage with children, as well as with their parents, grandparents and school teachers, to promote a healthier diet and more active lifestyle for young people. Over 61,000 children at 43 primary schools in Guangzhou, China are involved and the project is expected to be rolled out across China.

Jiani's responsibilities include organising and running interactive educational activities for school staff, children and their caretakers, supporting stakeholders to fully engage with programme activities and collecting and analyzing data for programme evaluation and research purposes. Her commitment to this project and its related research stems from a personal desire to bring about social change and to make scientific knowledge more accessible to the public. The eventual goal of the project is to apply all findings to tackling the increasing issue of child obesity in a broader context.

Jiani's work has already had a significant impact; changes in the lifestyle of the project's target audience have already been observed during follow-up data collection. She has also maintained good relationships with stakeholders to ensure follow up and post intervention monitoring. As well as delivering this huge project, Jiani has also developed her own research with a focus on the factors influencing family food purchasing/consumption and its link to socio-economic status. This is expected to reveal important insights into health inequalities in terms of child obesity in emerging economies like China.

By the end of the project, Jiani will publish her research findings and start a PhD that aligns with her research. This is an amazing achievement for a student just one year past her graduation. Her work has been highly praised by both the public she deals with, and by the professionals she works with and I highly recommend her for the CIEH Rising Environmental Health Star award.