This summer I volunteered four days a week at the Anschutz Medical Campus. I worked in a clinical research project for a new treatment of Parkinson’s disease called TMS (transcranial magnetic stimulation) for the first three days. The fourth day I worked in a lab for young women’s breast cancer. I found both to be very educational, both in terms of learning about each subject and the improvements being done and in further discovering what type of career I want to pursue.

In the clinical research project for Parkinson’s disease I observed all the testing and treatments done on the subjects. I learned the procedures for recruiting subjects, as well as how MEGs, EEGs, and TMS works. On one occasion, I aided in hooking up a patient to all the electrodes for the MEG and EEG. I was also able to experience what it’s like to be inside the MEG and take a hearing test. Working in this clinical research project allowed me to have some patient contact and to learn how to interact with Parkinson’s patients. I also observed one patient having a seizure and aided in ensuring their safety. I found this experience very beneficial in understanding what goes on during seizures, what they look like, and how to handle the situation in future events. I learned more about cognitive issues that arise from Parkinson’s and what sections of the brain are involved in which disorders.

Working in the lab for young women’s breast cancer was also beneficial. I was able to observe all of the experiments that are being done with all the tissue samples collected and learned how to make and run a western blot. I learned how to treat cell lines by pipetting media and antibiotic mixtures into the cell wells, as well as how to take care of cell cultures. The techniques, technology, and methods for testing theories and were all shown to me. During lab meetings held every week I saw how lab PI’s collaborate on research. Understanding how teams conducting similar research collaborate with each other and the work involved by both groups to get published in a scientific literature is extremely important if I ever wish to work in a lab again.

Overall, I discovered what the clinical and research lab worlds encompass. This experience taught me a lot about medical technology and how experiments are conducted safely within the lab. I believe my education was enhanced not only in terms of scientific facts, but also about myself. I discovered that I would like to work directly with patients, not just tissue
samples collected from them. Certain areas of the medical field that interest me were highlighted by this opportunity, and now I understand better where my education at CSU is taking me. Hopefully it will also turn up new similar opportunities for me in the future.