Alumna of the Double-Degree Master's Program "Clinical Medical Physics", offered by the Pontifical Catholic University in Santiago de Chile (UC) and Heidelberg University, Germany (UHD)

Javiera Godoy

Who are you and what's your current position?

I'm Javiera Godoy, former student from the double degree Master's program between UC and UHD. Currently I'm working in a radiotherapy center in Chile, in a city by the beach called Viña del Mar. The center is based in Clinica Reñaca and Hospital Naval, so I have to travel between both places on a daily basis.

Why did you choose Medical Physics and why did you decide to study at UC and UHD?

I have to confess I didn't have any idea of what Medical Physics was when I was doing my Bachelor's degree, but after doing some research about it, I was really attracted to the diversity of what the work as a medical physicist is, the fact to have a real job in a clinic (due to the fact that back then I was having my minor in Astronomy, so my mind was trying to settle with the idea of being a theorical rather than practical physicist) and also to be able to implement all the technology associated to the machines to handle cancer patients. When I found out that UC had this program with Heidelberg, it was the key note to take my decision, since to have the opportunity to be abroad is something I really enjoy because of all the possibilities in such a big subject as the world of medical physics is and the chance to use all this new technology that in Chile might not be.

What was the most challenging part of your study?

I think that the most challenging part was to adjust to the way of evaluation and examination in Heidelberg. It was really demanding, compared to UC, so I had to concentrate a lot in order to pass all the tests we had, because it was a lot of information in one shot and I don't have a really good memory.

What was the biggest benefit of your study?

Wow, there were so many benefits of this program, since itself involved all this new advanced technology, everything explained in such a way that was really clear to me thanks to all the professors who were obviously so immersed in all this knowledge, I think I was overwhelmed with this new world so I never hesitated about being in the program. Also, the chance to be abroad always helps to this personal development that people see when you go back but you really appreciate because it gives you the certainty of being able to do this job, so it's really cool how the program makes you feel proud.

Could you explain your reasons for your own career pathway?

I consider myself a practical person. I learn a lot by doing things, so I always thought about being in a clinic, hopefully working with everything I've heard. My current work, even though it is a small Radiotherapy center, has given me the chance to get better with the Linacs we have, but also, to get in touch with all the people that I have met during my journey, so I could go over, learn from them and from their clinic's machines, and open a branch in radiation protection which I didn't realize I would like. I guess it all comes down to the fact that I like learning and I have forged the path to be able to do it.

Which advice do you have for young students or scientists thinking about their own career pathways

Never ever settle for what you think you fully know out of fear. The medical physics world is infinite, the things you thought you wanted to do in the beginning, because you felt comfortable with that idea, might not be the best thing for you. Reach out to people, ask questions, dive in some unknown medical physics ocean, because there is a lot to do out there and you might be the right person in the right place with the right angle to develop it. Be thankful for what you have learnt, for the teachers you get to learn from, and for all the people (related or not to the subject) you get to meet. All this mixture is going to help you to become the person you should be… And you will like it.