This summer I have been researching with several faculty from the Nursing Department on the effects of proper fitting shoes on pain and activity in Heartside community residents. Homeless adults, like those residing in the Heartside neighborhood, may experience negative effects of improper footwear more than the general public. This is because the main mode of transportation for homeless adults is walking. In addition, this population has limited access to foot care supplies and often place other needs, such as food and shelter, above foot health and/or pain. When these problems are not addressed, foot pain can contribute to decreased activity and physical functioning. We hypothesize that proper fitting footwear will decrease pain and increase activity level in adults experiencing homelessness in the Heartside neighborhood.

To test this hypothesis we conducted a six-week intervention. We measured pain, foot health, and activity before and after participants wore proper fitting shoes for the six-week time period. We measured participant’s pain with the use of the brief pain inventory survey. Foot health was measured with the foot health status questionnaire and a physical examination of their feet. Activity level was determined through use of a timed 10-meter walk test. Currently, we have enrolled 25 out of 30 participants and are still collecting baseline data.

This research project is an amazing opportunity for me to apply knowledge I have learned at Calvin. During this summer I was in charge of contacting and scheduling candidates and following up with participants in the study. I was also able to perform multiple interviews with participants during data collection. This research has allowed me to grow as a student and a Christian, through serving those who have very little in my hometown. Initially, conducting interviews and talking with participants was a task outside of my comfort zone. After getting to know a few of the members of the Heartside community, I found myself more comfortable with interviewing them. Many of them are very open and knowledgeable about their faith and are inspirations for me in my walk. This has been an eye opening experience for me to the struggles people face in my own backyard and will be beneficial now and in the future.