

My main disagreement with 80000 hours is that I think cause area is less important than they do, because I think the effect of me doing a job versus the next best person (replaceability) is more important than they think. I think I also value personal fit more than 80000 hours recommends.

Ordering of broad cause areas in my opinion

1. AI alignment
2. Nuclear War
3. Biosecurity and pandemics
4. Mental health
5. Global health and development
6. Cause prioritisation
7. Animal welfare
8. Anti-ageing research

Personal Fit

What I want from my job, day to day -

I desire a job with a great amount of social interaction and work in teams.

During the pandemic, my degree involved working alone at my computer for a year which I found very unsatisfying and unengaging.

A high amount of social interaction and team based work is definitely possible in clinical medicine but I'm worried that I won't get this from many jobs where much of the time is spent working at a computer or a lab bench. I'm unsure about this however, so I should try to test this by finding an internship based in an office or a lab.

It's possible that I found working at my computer alone unsatisfying because I found lectures and tutorials unengaging, rather than because of the lack of social interaction. I didn't mind working at my computer alone when I was doing flashcards by myself or doing EA aligned work.

Being open to a computer based job would make me more likely pursue a career at the intersection of global health and development economics, or in biosecurity. It would also make me more likely to choose academic public health over academic infectious diseases as a longer-term career path.

Salary -

Based on inside view calculations, in the long-term I would like to be earning at least
Outside London - £40k after tax / £60k before tax
Inside London - £60k after tax / £100k before tax

Geographical location -

Family, friends and romantic relationships are very important to me. I do not want to migrate out of the UK.

Cause Areas

AI

I think AI alignment is important but I have never explored it in detail. I should learn a bit more about AI alignment to gain an understanding of whether it might actually be something which I should consider working on. I should also reach out to an AI safety researcher to learn more about what the work looks like.

Nuclear War

I think war is important to prevent. I'm not sure what working on this practically looks like though. I should consider interning at a think tank, or trying to get in touch with people working on international relations to learn more about their work.

Animal Welfare

I think animal welfare is very important, but I don't think that I am passionate enough about animal welfare to want to work directly on it.

I think biosecurity and pandemics, global health / development, cause prioritisation, mental health and anti-ageing research could all be a good fit for me.

I think academic medicine is the best way for me to work on all of these since there is a good exit option into clinical medicine if I don't end up getting or enjoying research jobs.

Choices within Academic Medicine

Within academic medicine, I am choosing specialties between public health, infectious diseases and psychiatry.

I am primarily choosing between these based on the social impact of the research, but am also considering how engaging the non-research work is. I have experienced public health and infectious diseases work which seemed similarly engaging, but have not yet experienced psychiatry. I will aim to gain work experience in psychiatry and to reach out to some psychiatrists to learn more about what the career looks like.

Potential research topics by specialty:

Public health - global health (*epidemiology / policy*), mental health (*epidemiology / policy*), development economics and/or biosecurity *policy*

Infectious diseases - biosecurity (life sciences or policy) or global health (life sciences, epidemiology / policy)

Psychiatry - mental health (life sciences, epidemiology or policy) and/or pain (life sciences, epidemiology or policy)

I did not have a good understanding of how research funding works and what this means for the counterfactual impact of research. From Google searches, I have learned that lots of grants are not specific to a research field, meaning that by applying for these grants, I can increase the counterfactual impact of my research. This means that I can also prioritise between research areas purely on how pressing the problems seem, rather than worrying about the counterfactuals with regards to where the funding for my research is coming from.

While I currently think that biosecurity is more pressing than global health, development, mental health and pain, I would like to spend more time reading about these areas to help me make a more informed decision over which to prioritise. I would also like to discuss my thoughts on the relative importance of these areas with other people in the effective altruism community.

I could work on biosecurity via both academic public health and academic infectious diseases. I think keeping the option open to academic public health is valuable, in case I find clinical medicine in infectious diseases to be too tiring, challenging and high-risk with regards to litigation.

I have 5 years to choose between infectious diseases, and neurology as a clinical career at ST3 level, or 3 years to choose between them and public health as a clinical career at ST1 level in the UK's National Health Service. However, I can always pick one and change later, but it will cost me some time.

Other Riskier Paths

Entrepreneurship

I think high-impact entrepreneurship has a high counterfactual impact because it is generally very not replaceable.

I have some experience in operations from volunteering roles, which I really enjoyed.

I'm open to exploring both for-profit and non-profit entrepreneurship. I'm going to join the EA Entrepreneurs Slack channel and talk to people about their experiences pursuing impact entrepreneurship.

Politics

I think being a doctor in the National Health Service is a valuable credential for politics in the UK. I have very little political experience, but would consider pursuing politics in the future. For now, I could build some experience by looking for roles in my medical trade union.

Upcoming decisions

I am applying for the Specialised Foundation Programme (Research) for after I graduate, and have multiple options in terms of research projects. I need to think carefully about which projects will best help me develop skills for future research.

I have also applied for a researcher role at Rethink Priorities focusing on Global Health and will consider whether to choose this role over entering clinical medicine if I receive an offer.

Next Steps for Information Gathering

Learn more about AI Safety.

Talk to some AI Safety researchers about their work.

Talk to people working on international relations and war prevention.

Gain work experience in psychiatry.

Discuss psychiatry careers with psychiatrists

Discuss entrepreneurship with entrepreneurs.

Look for roles in my medical trade union.

Read more about the relative importance of biosecurity, global health, development, mental health and pain.

Join the EA Entrepreneurs Slack channel.