

NR-WFNR-SIG Travel bursary – 2019 – Report

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Attending the NR-WFNR-SIG conference in Granada was my first opportunity to attend a conference outside of Australia and New Zealand, and it was an honour to be invited to present my research in an oral presentation and poster. Taking part in the conference allowed me for the first time to feel part of an international community of rehabilitation researchers and clinicians. At the conference, I met internationally based researchers and clinicians working in neurorehabilitation, and it was a pleasure to 'put a face' to names I have often cited! I had the opportunity to meet fellow students, as well as reconnect with students who had visited Monash-Epworth Rehabilitation Research Centre on exchanges. I also met clinicians and researchers with lived experience of brain injury and it is always a privilege to hear their unique perspectives as both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' to brain injury. Through these meetings I learnt about different approaches to rehabilitation from such diverse locations as the United Kingdom, Spain, the Netherlands, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Brazil and Palestine. I am sure that among the people I have met, there are future colleagues and collaborators.

Listening to presentations I was inspired to consider new approaches to my current research but also directions for future research, particularly in areas which are close to my heart such as social identity, friendship networks and the experience of loneliness after brain injury. I heard about interesting applications of qualitative and quantitative methods to research questions which can be challenging to answer. I also learnt about supporting patients through sensitive assessment and increasing their sense of control, as well as learning about innovative use of technology, and I know this knowledge will shape my future work as a clinician. Finally, by having the opportunity to present my research to an international audience, I feel I have been able to give back to my research participants. I have found that people with an acquired brain injury and their families volunteer to participate in research because they want their experiences to contribute to the broader community and to help

others impacted by brain injury. Sharing their experiences through my research with conference attendees, I believe, goes some way towards achieving their wishes.

Being a postgraduate research student can be a lonely path and it can feel like you are caught up in endless recruitment, analysis and writing. Financial pressures are also always on the horizon and the money I received from the Travel Bursary went towards my airfare and accommodation. Attending the NR-WFNR-SIG conference and presenting gave meaning to the long trek of being a research student. Meeting other researchers and clinicians, and feeling part of the neurorehabilitation community, has inspired me in my final year of study and I am looking forward to contributing to that community in the future as a researcher and a clinician. I would like to thank the committee for awarding me the Travel Bursary because attending the conference was exciting and inspirational and I know the experience has shaped my future career.