

Eager to Learn: An Undergraduate's Guide to the PMG Conference of 2015

Introduction

Scanning barcodes and chatting to locals was my average Saturday at my part time job during college. I didn't particularly want a career at WH Smith's however, and eventually found the perfect undergraduate course for me: BSc Healthcare Science (Rehabilitation Engineering). Designing wheelchair and prosthetic solutions was perfect! I would get to be out in the field with clients, but also spend time at the drawing board designing what they needed. Then, to have a 50 weeks' placement at King's College Hospital was the icing on the cake!

Current Experience

So far, my time as a student in higher education has been spent either in lectures studying the very basics of healthcare or, at my placement with the rehabilitation engineering division at King's, getting to grips with the services provided. It's safe to say I've only dipped one toe into the pool that is my future career; there is still an awful lot to learn and experience. With this in mind, having been told about the PMG conference and the bursaries provided, applying was naturally a must. To stride into my second year with the benefit of so much additional information would keep me one step ahead of my fellow students, and I was very lucky to be accepted for a bursary to attend.

The Conference

I had a plan before I arrived at the conference: I would get to know the campus, then talk to as many of the exhibition stand attendees as possible and, finally, home in on a particular field that interested me to look into it further. Having the exhibition floor plan ahead of the event was particularly useful as I could look up each company and note down which ones I wanted to visit. The only systems I was familiar with were those of Invacare and Sunrise, so I wanted to learn more about these two companies and their products in preparation for my placement in Year 2, plus I would be basing my Year 3 project on these systems. I also wanted to be more aware of the different companies and systems that I may come across in the future.

I'm not going to lie, it was very daunting to begin with. To be among delegates with so much experience in the field, using terminology I didn't yet know, I couldn't help but feel out of my depth. However, I tried to use the welcome curry night to break the ice with other delegates so that, when the first full day of the conference began, I was already more linguistically prepared.

The talks and seminars were highly informative, giving light to current research and ongoing projects both in the UK and abroad. Having information about each plenary and parallel session was useful, so I knew what each presentation was about. Even if I wasn't able to attend, I could still read about the topic. While I wasn't attending sessions, I wandered around the exhibition hall looking at the huge variety of chairs and related products. There were a couple of products that caught my eye more than others, for example, at the RMS stand, the ALLY chair that incorporates the Segway, and also the Matrix systems at Matrix Seating and South West Seating as I had had very little involvement with these custom seating techniques.

Post Conference Thoughts

I am still only at the beginning of my studies but, through attending the PMG conference, I have gained so much enlightenment about the current solutions for wheelchairs and seating that I will undoubtedly be working with in the future. The experience as a whole was invigorating, and I cannot wait to use what I have learned when completing my degree; then I can finally get out there and start my journey properly.

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