

My lucky star is shining!

I am one of the lucky people awarded a bursary to attend the 2015 PMG Conference. Let me introduce myself.....

I graduated as a physiotherapist in Romania where I then worked for 20 years, mainly in neurological rehabilitation for children and adults. In November 2014 I was lucky enough to be offered a position with the NHS, joining the specialist wheelchair service for Central London. This was a huge step for me into a new, such highly specialised field.

Luck struck for me again when my manager and colleagues introduced me to the PMG website.

Everybody knows how difficult it is at the start, when you have to gain so much knowledge and learn the many skills needed for this special job. So, when I saw the advert for the PMG conference event on the website, it looked to me like a dream which I immediately had to put to the back of my mind. All my colleagues were wanting to attend and I wouldn't even dare to ask to join this major event.

A few weeks later, my lucky star was shining again when PMG advertised the opportunity for us (the beginners) to apply for a BURSARY. I remember that it was late in the afternoon, after finishing my shift, when I timidly completed the application, without having much hope. A few weeks later, guess what? I received a reply from Olwen and Ffion, who gave me the good news – “You have been awarded a bursary to attend the PMG Conference”. Big words for a beginner in the field, and a dream (the small dream left at the back of my head) that became a reality.

So here I am on the 13th of July 2015, stepping into Leeds University, going to the PMG Conference! An amazing location in the North of England, in a university setting, with me in the auditorium and lecture theatres listening to the fantastic range of speakers.

As you can imagine, in 20 years of physiotherapy and a completed Ph.D., I've had extensive experience of conferences and congresses in the UK and abroad. But of them all, and when I say “all” I mean it, this event has really impressed me and made a huge impact on me as a person and as a professional.

The opening plenary session and Gala Dinner featuring the most inspiring OT and wheelchair user, Dave Calver, brought tears to my eyes and, at the same time, gave me the strength and courage to believe that I will make my way in this new (to me) speciality. To see a person who, from his own experience (a tragic one), achieved so much and now helping so many people all over the world, is not only inspirational, it is something to aim for.

And it was not only Dave who made me feel like this, but all the other speakers (and I tried to cover all the lectures, taking turns with my colleagues and exchanging impressions).

This is one of the reasons that made me appreciate this conference as one of the best in my entire career. Even though we listened to and witnessed great researchers in the field, we didn't get bored, not even during the final sessions on the third day. And I am sure it was a general feeling. Another reason is the wealth of information and new knowledge provided about the demanding environment of posture and mobility.

Then there were all the fantastic nights out, when we gathered together, speakers, delegates and exhibitors, creating great memories as we mixed together feeling like one big family. There weren't titles or levels or roles. It was a great atmosphere, everyone speaking the same language of the soul and with our minds dedicated to wheelchair users. It was a blessing to be there.

And so here I am writing to you months after the conference, and the greatest news is that I am now focusing on special seating. Could this be purely chance? Probably not, when I tell you that my first experience in special seating was during one of the PMG conference lectures where specialists from King's and Oxford did practical demos.

I don't have enough words to thank all the organisers and sponsors who made this event happen. You are changing the destiny and future of people like me, and of the people who are relying on us.

Great staff!!!

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