**PMG 2016: An invaluable experience**

I would like to start this article by saying that I am extremely grateful for being given the opportunity to attend PMG 2016. I was introduced to PMG by a colleague and having heard so much about it I became extremely interested and decided to join it.
Having joined the Wheelchair services only a few months ago and many members of the team wishing to attend the PMG conference; I knew my chances of obtaining funding through the service were limited. Encouraged by my service manager, I decided to apply for the bursary offered by PMG to cover the cost of attendance. I was very pleased to learn the outcome that I had secured the funding and would be able to attend the conference. I was looking forward to meeting and learning from other clinician, specialist and professionals working in the field.

At first I felt a bit overwhelmed by the number of exhibitors, the different plenary and parallel session. However within a few hours I was comfortably walking around the stands and engaging in discussion with the exhibitors and other delegates. Everyone was very approachable and welcoming. Being a novice to the area of wheelchairs it was very useful sharing experiences with other colleagues from different services across the country. On one hand the different presentations and posters presented and covered a varied range of topics and on the other hand the exhibitions were a great opportunity to explore new products and get ‘hands on’ with it. On the whole, the entire event was a great platform to make new links. The social events made it possible to meet other delegates and exhibitors in a relaxed environment.

The opening plenary session by Ade Adepitan was awe inspiring and left a lasting impression on me. It was absolutely fascinating to hear his life’s journey and how sports had changed his life. His ongoing work with Go kids go organisation is truly inspirational. Furthermore, I was very impressed by the range of topics presented in different plenary session, parallel session and poster presentations. These enabled me to refresh my previous knowledge and provided me new ideas. I was particularly impressed by the presentation on ‘understanding propulsive shoulder forces and scapular kinematics during the normal wheelchair use’ by Tom Paulson. This prompted me to ensure that I emphasise regarding the need for using the correct propelling technique to all my patients. I am now able to provide a good and clear evidence based explanation regarding the effects it has on the shoulder and how it is closely related to shoulder pain. The presentation also stressed on the fact that we do not clearly understand the interaction between the wheelchair configuration, inefficient propelling and how it affects shoulder girdle structures. This is of great concern as it affects most manual wheelchair users who heavily rely on their upper limb for ADL’s. Further work is required in this area to improve our understanding of such issues. It was very encouraging to hear about the new research and developments relating to such important issues.

More recently PHB or personal health budgets has been introduced and like many others I was interested in knowing what future may hold for wheelchair services, this made me attend the session on personal health budgets. It was a very intriguing presentation. The presentation by Steven Pruner ‘Personalising wheelchair services – your chance to influence the process’ explained that the aim of personal health budget was to give people with long term conditions greater choice and control over their care in a way that suits them. It outlined that the NHS Mandate 2016/17 has set goal of delivering between 50,000 and 100,000 PHBs by 2020, up from the current 4,700 for the NHS in England. Although this has had positive impact on large number patient in some areas of healthcare, it was unclear how it would affect the wheelchair services across the country. This session was very interactive. Many questions from the delegates regarding the potential pitfalls of the system were not clarified. Some basic issues regarding – who would be responsible for the ongoing repairs and maintenance of the complex seating systems prescribed to patients? Does it completely replace voucher system etc remained unanswered. As this system is currently being piloted in some wheelchair services and its effect on the wheelchair services nationally is yet unknown, we can only hope that it proves to be a positive one.

Overall, I feel that by attending PMG I have increased my confidence by consolidating my knowledge and improved my understanding of posture and seating. There was something to take back from every session. I am truly grateful to the entire team of PMG for providing me with the bursary and giving me this opportunity. I cannot thank all the organisers and sponsors enough for organising such an excellent conference.

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