I was delighted to be awarded a bursary enabling me to attend the 2016 PMG Conference in Birmingham.

The conference was very well located and easy to find in central Birmingham. The venue itself was very comfortable and provided an excellent base in which to accommodate the equipment exhibition, the lectures and the conference workshop sessions. The staff at the venue were very helpful and friendly.

The opening plenary session given by Ade Adepitan, TV presenter and patron of Go Kids Go, was a real highlight for me. Ade spoke with passion and a real insight into the issues faced by young wheelchair users in the past and how things have moved on since. He also provided thought provoking discussion on some of the challenges that we as a society need start to tackle now.

Later on the same morning was another interesting talk was given by Sam Esson of Kings College Hospital London on the use of 3d printing and its application to posture and mobility work. This was a subject that I found intriguing despite my prior misconceptions on the subject! 3D printing looks set to change the way we work as well as to reduce the cost of posture and mobility equipment in the future and Sam’s talk really served to whet the appetite to learn more about the wider application of 3D printing in a therapeutic setting.

It was difficult to choose between the parallel sessions offered, however, the session given on joint funded seating gave real food for thought. In the increasingly challenging financial climate in which we are all working, there is evermore the need for cutting cost. However, the solutions offered by the joint working of Tower Hamlets Wheelchair Services and Barts NHS Health Trust appeared to not only deliver cost savings but also an improvement in patient experience. This simple but effective solution involved collaborative working at its most efficient and is something that some trusts and organisations are embracing more slowly than others but surely something we should all be sitting up and taking notice of.

Rounding things off on the first day was another highlight for me. The debate between Wendy Murphy and Martin Gough Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon in their session entitled ‘Making life better: postural management & surgery for the child and adult with complex disability.’ Their debate reflected the real thoughts and dilemmas that have gone through my own mind throughout my career when deciding how much is too much? How much can we, *should* we expect families and people with profound disabilities to take on in the name of therapy? What promises are we making them and are we sure that the gain will be worth the very real emotional, physical and financial cost to the patient and their carers? Being honest with ourselves as professionals has to be the first step.

The second day brought more interesting talks, of particular note to me was Dr Nathan Babiker’s talk on Working with the psychological consequences of trauma. The discussion around medicalising a natural grieving process as opposed to dealing with the full effects of PTSD was a subject way outside my area of expertise but I felt that I learnt a great deal that will enable me to make onward referrals more effectively.

In and amongst all of these interesting and thought provoking talks was the opportunity to visit the exhibition. This was filled with a variety of diverse but relevant equipment and knowledgeable company representatives who were able to demonstrate their wares over the course of the two days. The whole event being rounded off nicely with a visit to the bookstall where I was able to use the book voucher provided in our conference pack to put towards a new book for my department at work (after enjoying a read of it on the train home!)

Thank you for the opportunity to attend this fantastic conference. If you are given the opportunity to attend a PMG conference you’ll be busy for the full two days but you will leave buzzing with ideas and you won’t be sorry that you came!