



In 2020 I felt extremely fortunate to receive a £500 grant from the MACP to help me work towards my second MSc placement, as well as my MSc dissertation. The dissertation focussed upon researching the behaviour change techniques that may increase adherence to home exercises for upper extremity musculoskeletal disorders.

I applied for the grant in 2020, during the pandemic. As a self-employed physiotherapist, Covid-19 meant that I was unable to work for several months. Given that I was also self-funding my MSc, 2020 was financially very challenging. In addition, my studies were halted: my last placement was stopped after one week (due to lockdown) and postponed indefinitely.

When my work did restart, I made up for lost time and income by working long hours, every day and through the weekends. As a result, I felt unable to take any time off from work in order to finish my dissertation. However, after receiving the bursary, I felt I had a financial buffer so that I could now take some days off from work. This meant that I could invest time and money into my dissertation: Firstly, it allowed me to complement my self-directed learning on behaviour change techniques by enrolling in the online taught module 'Behaviour Change Technique Taxonomy volume 1'. The module took 3 days to complete. I thoroughly learnt the background of Behaviour Change Techniques, how to recognise them in research, and how to code (or label) them in studies. This was vital for my dissertation, as I scoured through studies, trying to identify techniques that researchers used so as to increase their participants' adherence to home exercises. Without enrolling in this course, I would have been totally unable to recognise and code these techniques, and assess whether they had a role in the studies' outcomes. This would have meant that I would not have been able to produce a piece of work with any true value, and in which I had confidence in the findings.

Secondly, the bursary allowed me to take time from work in order to complete my second placement, which resumed in late 2020 and focussed upon the upper extremity. The placement gave me a perfect opportunity to implement the behaviour change research I had learnt in the online module, as well as discuss current literature for the implementation of these techniques with regards to upper extremity musculoskeletal disorders.

As such, participation in both the module and the placement furthered my dissertation and self-directed learning greatly. I received a distinction for both my placement and dissertation, and my work was published by the journal 'Musculoskeletal Care' in early 2021.

Many thanks to the MACP for giving me this bursary. I cannot stress how personally and professionally valuable it was for me in very challenging times.

Jonathan Thacker