

REPORT ON ISSLS CONFERENCE FOR MACP

Dr Christine Comer July 2017

At the beginning of June I attended the five-day International Society for the Study of the Lumbar Spine (ISSLS) research conference in Athens, partially funded by an MACP research award which helped with the costs of the conference fees and travel. ISSLS is an important international research conference where experts in spinal care from across the world come together each year to present and discuss their research work.

The meeting brings together researchers from a range of disciplines and professions. It provides a fantastic opportunity to learn about emerging research from basic scientists and microbiologists such as the role of infection in disc degeneration and progress in stem cell treatments, and from surgeons and physicians researching the latest surgical and diagnostic techniques such as computerized interpretation of MRI scans, and indeed from young researchers introducing new research methods such as crowd-sourcing for consensus building studies.

Attending the conference brought me abreast of current research in my own particular area of interest; the nonsurgical management of lumbar spinal stenosis (LSS), and gave me the opportunity for discussion and networking with international researchers in this field. Research groups in Canada, Europe and Asia delivered podium presentations and displayed posters on studies of the natural history of LSS, shared-decision-making processes, and new rehabilitation programmes in the management of LSS. The insight gained from meeting those at the forefront of research in this area will help to inform my own future research as well as guiding the clinical care provided by myself and physiotherapy colleagues in the Leeds MSK rehabilitation service for this patient group.

Participation in an international taskforce meeting for the diagnosis and management of LSS on the first morning of the conference was an important part of my attendance at this conference. Here, the results of the taskforce's Delphi study to achieve consensus on the diagnostic symptoms for LSS were discussed, and progress was made on the next stage of building consensus around appropriate diagnostic tests for confirming LSS. My presence at this taskforce meeting allowed me to continue my involvement in this current work, and to put forward ideas for future research work for the taskforce. It also provided an important opportunity to garner support from this international group of experts for my future research plans into targeted community-based rehabilitation for LSS, which will be undertaken if successful in my application for an NIHR Clinical Lectureship.

Part of the planned programme of research for the NIHR Clinical Lectureship involves designing a clinical pathway for LSS patients using consensus building methodology and drawing on the past and current work of the taskforce. The clinical lectureship would also provide me with the opportunity to develop research capacity in our trust, and in particular to support physiotherapy and AHP clinicians to develop as clinical researchers: we currently have two MACP-qualified physiotherapy clinicians who are keen to follow this career pathway.

Research evidence from the conference relating to clinical practice will be shared across the community-care based Musculoskeletal clinical team in which I work

through a service-wide training session in the near future, where I will be very pleased to acknowledge the support that the MACP has provided. I am also delighted to be able to report that I have just been informed that my NIHR Clinical Lectureship application has been shortlisted, and if successful in the final round of this competition, the knowledge, experience and confidence I have gained from attending and participating in the ISSLS conference will be invaluable.