DUCIGS Graduate Research & Training Award Field Report

Name: Sarah H. Cross, Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University
Project Title: Is Socioeconomic Status a Fundamental Cause of Racial Differences in End-of-Life Care Use
Conference: World Congress of the European Association of Palliative Care
Location: Berlin, Germany
Date: May 23-25, 2019

The European Association of Palliative Care provides a forum for all those either working, or with an interest in palliative care throughout Europe and beyond and sponsors the World Congress biannually. For 2019, the World Congress’ theme was “Global Palliative Care – Shaping the future” and explored equitable access to palliative care in Europe and around the world. This conference provided an unparalleled opportunity to network and meet with clinicians, researchers, and educators in palliative care from across the globe to exchange knowledge, to celebrate diversity and richness, and make new collaborations.

Due to the generous support of the Duke University Center for International and Global Studies, I was able to travel to Berlin to attend the 2019 EAPC World Congress along with more than 3,000 other attendees from 100 countries. This record attendance demonstrates the increasing recognition of the importance of palliative care in society around the world.

On the first day of the conference, I presented my research on racial disparities in palliative and end-of-life care use in the United States. In this project, I explore the relationship between education level and the important end-of-life outcomes of hospital death, ICU use, and hospice use. I also attended numerous sessions related to my professional interests including: Understanding Health Promotion in End of Life Care: from Policy Change to Community Action; Implementing Advance Care Planning across the Healthcare System in Europe and the US; Increasing the Value of Randomized Controlled Trials for Complex Interventions in Palliative Care; and Using Big Data to Improve End-of-Life Care: Opportunities and Challenges. Plenary speakers touched on the gender gap in palliative care research; the past, present and future of global palliative care, and increasing the value of research in palliative care. A particular privilege was the opportunity to hear Dr. M. R. Rajagopal, the father of palliative care in India and a nominee for the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, speak on the imperative for universal access to palliative care and pain relief.
The EAPC World Congress also provided important opportunities for networking. For example, one senior medical professor has actively recruited me for a post-doctoral fellowship as a result of our meeting in Berlin. I was also able to meet many clinicians and researchers from around the world and learn about their projects in addition to discussing and getting input on my own research.

As my first international research presentation, the EAPC World Congress was an important step in developing my presentation skills and my reputation as an early-career scholar. I am incredibly grateful for the support of the Duke University Center for International and Global Studies, for supporting my travel to Berlin and attendance at the 2019 EAPC World Congress. Thank you!