Summary report: World Confederation of Physiotherapy Congress, May 2019

With the gracious support from DUCIGS, I was able to attend the bi-annually World Confederation of Physiotherapy Congress in Geneva, Switzerland, the world’s largest Physiotherapy convention. Given that the congress was on my graduation weekend from the MSc in Global Health Program, I was only able to attend the last day of the conference. I was honored to be invited to participate in three events of the conference.

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The first item on my agenda was to be a member in a panel discussion to reflect on the role of Physical therapy and the need for rehabilitation professionals in the management of neglected tropical diseases. Following that discussion, my mentor and I presented the quantitative findings of our study we conducted in Bangladesh in 2018. I have finished the day at the conference with a platform presentation, where I got to present our qualitative findings of the study and answer the audience’s questions. Overall, the day at the congress was a great opportunity for me personally, professionally but also for the participants in our study. The study presented the cases of a new and tragic mode of acquiring a spinal cord injury, that affects only young females in Bangladesh. The so called scarf injuries, can occur when the scarves, known as Orna, that the women in Bangladeshi culture are expected to wear gets entangled in the drive shaft of a newly introduced battery-run auto-rickshaw, imported from China. Since this conference audience mainly was clinicians, that do not work in Global Health, it was striking to see the reactions to our presentations and the willingness to get involved. The event was a great opportunity for me to network with leaders in the Physical Therapy world, as well as connect with old professors from my previous University, where I obtained my Physical Therapy degree.

The conference raised awareness on our research topic and was a great reinforcement for me to continue the work that I’ve started, to hopefully have a lasting impact in the world of rehabilitation and global health. During the times I did not present our study, I was able to network with leaders of various fields and attend several presentations and workshops.
I sincerely thank DUCIGS for the opportunity to share our findings and exchange ideas with professionals from a big variety of backgrounds.

Me and some of my professors from the Physical Therapy Program I attended in Amsterdam 2012-2016.