



DR JASMINE HEARN
PAUL KENNEDY 'MAKING A DIFFERENCE' BURSARY REPORT

Support from the MASCIP Paul Kennedy 'Making a Difference' bursary facilitated my ability to present the very positive results of my recent research in collaboration with Breathworks and the National Spinal Injuries centre on an internet-delivered mindfulness course for people with spinal cord injury (SCI) and chronic neuropathic pain. Whilst one of the key benefits of my attendance at ISCoS was to share the results of this work with those on the frontline of work with people with SCI, clinically and in research, the bursary also facilitated my attendance at an incredibly educational and inspirational event, and my first experience of an ISCoS conference.

One aim of my attendance at ISCoS was to connect with leading institutions and organisations involved in promoting psychological wellbeing after SCI. As a psychologist, I was extremely pleased to see the psychology-laden content within the ISCoS programme, and one of the many highlights included attending the excellent psychology pre-conference workshop jointly hosted by ISCoS, the Rehabilitation Psychology Interest Group of the Australian Psychological Society, and others. Key learning points included:

- The need to promote engagement with pleasant experiences, more of which is associated with reduced depression
- That feelings of hope after injury are not necessarily counter-productive, acting as a stress-buffer, and are associated with self-efficacy (the belief in one's ability to manage the SCI), and acceptance
- That self-efficacy may be a key player in psychological adjustment after SCI (though much more work is needed)

Attendance at this workshop marked the start of my networking with colleagues working on similar themes to myself and beginning conversations regarding international collaborations.

Sharing the results of the first study of internet-delivered mindfulness to frontline professionals initiated many discussions with colleagues, and I was in a very lucky position to be able to learn from others about the ways that they are using mindfulness and new technologies to enhance wellbeing after SCI in hospitals and institutions around the world. This led to discussions around improving the accessibility of mindfulness in the rehabilitation and support of people with SCI. Just some outcomes of these discussions included being invited to support the integration of mindfulness components in an online course being developed by colleagues in Canada, and supporting the integration of mindfulness sessions for staff working at The JWCRR at The University of Sydney.

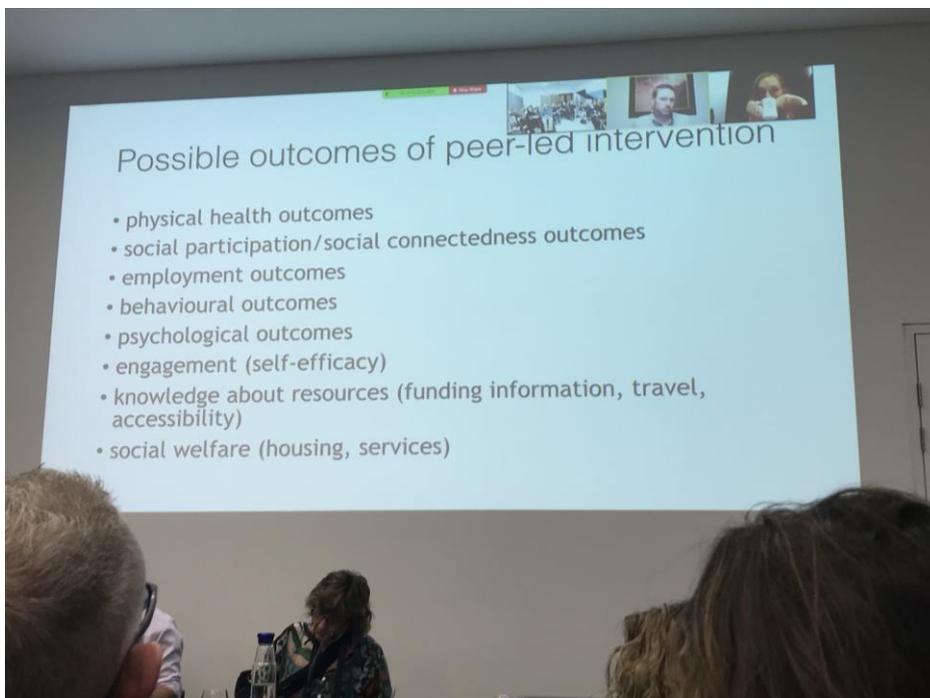
Other workshops, such as one on the topic of translating pain research into practice had delegates queuing out of the door, and served to illustrate the prominence of the issue of pain, the dedication of delegates to improve pain in the people they serve, and the proficiency of the knowledgeable speakers. Similarly, the instructional course on enhancing wellbeing after SCI highlighted the move towards enhancing resilience and guided delegates in using the Spinal Cord Injury Adjustment Model to do so. Other key learning points were around the need to facilitate self-compassion in those

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providing care for people with SCI (discussed by Dr Annalisa Dezarnaulds) and the full workshop on peer-led interventions (during which colleagues from Canada and the UK, including Lucy Robinson of the National Spinal Injuries Centre, skyped in to talk to the audience), an area which is seeing rapid growth and interest arising from the many benefits offered to people with SCI.



(Annalisa Dezarnaulds discusses the power of compassion and self-compassion)



(Lucy Robinson and colleagues on the benefits of peer-support)

It was great to see so many psychologists, social workers, and others attending the psychology special interest group meeting, during which best practice resources were shared, and research and practice priorities identified. The group also discussed themes for a psychology pre-conference



workshop at the next ISCoS meeting in Nice, France. I'm pleased to be among many others who will be involved in organising this workshop.



(The Psychology Special Interest Group at ISCoS, 2018)

Stemming from the pre-conference psychology workshop, a meeting with psychologists from across the world was hosted after ISCoS at The John Walsh Centre for Rehabilitation Research (JWCRR) at The University of Sydney in Paul Kennedy's memory. Prof James Middleton introduced the meeting, telling the audience about Paul's visit to Sydney many years ago to deliver workshops to people with SCI, and highlighting the importance of international collaborations. James' introduction also iterated the poignancy of Paul's personal and professional impact on people with SCI, and the people working to serve them, the loss of whom continues to be felt across the world. The aim of the day was to summarise learning from ISCoS, continue collaboration discussions around ways of supporting current research projects, facilitate further knowledge exchange and to build on professional relationships between the UK and colleagues in Australia. This was a particularly important and influential visit, given the significant overlap of academic interests I have with members of The JWCRR, such as internet-delivered interventions, and pain management after SCI.

As I departed Sydney, I reflected on the many exciting research projects and developments that I learned about, and the many more questions that ISCoS left me with. I landed back in the UK with a broadened perspective that equipped me with knowledge of the most up to date trends and challenges in SCI clinical work and research. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity afforded to me by MASCIP, and very excited to start working on my next projects alongside new friends and colleagues from Australia, New Zealand, and around the world.