

MASCIP, The Paul Kennedy ‘Making a Difference’ Bursary 2019 Recipient, Sunita Maharjan

The Paul Kennedy Making a Difference Bursary facilitated me to grab the wonderful opportunity to attend the 58th International Spinal Cord Injury Society (ISCoS) conference in Nice, France. As part of Master’s in Nursing education, I conducted ‘a qualitative study on neuropathic pain (NP) experiences of patients following spinal cord injury (SCI)’. Effective management of NP after SCI is challenging for healthcare professionals. It is important to understand subjective NP experience of people with SCI to improve and adequately manage NP related to SCI. So far, I have analysed the data collected from a purposeful sample of 5 individuals with NP related to SCI. These individuals were recruited from a rehabilitation hospital in Dublin. The demographics of participants are illustrated in the table below:

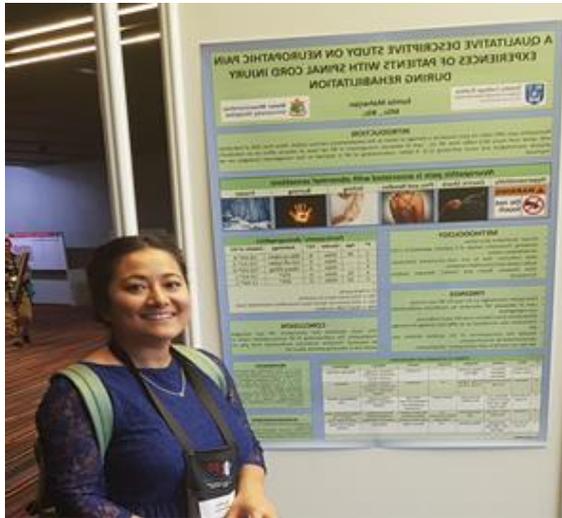
Participants’ demographics					
P*	Age	Gender	TSI*	Aetiology	Details of SCI
1	45	Male	8	Bike accident	C6 AIS* B
2	N/A*	Male	4	Fell off ladder	T10 AIS* A
3	N/A*	Male	3	Heavy lifting	T10 AIS* D
4	56	Male	6	RTA*	C4 AIS* C
5	19	Male	3	RTA*	L2 AIS* C
* P => Participants TSI => Time Since Injury (in months) AIS => ASIA (American Spinal Injury Association) Impairment Scale N/A => Not available RTA => Road Traffic Accident					

Some of the significant findings of the research are as follows:

- Majority of participants reported burning sensation, persistent pain, scoring 7 or above out of 10.
- Physical activities helped to relieve pain whereas being idle aggravated pain.
- Participants’ knowledge on NP was limited.
- Lack of adequate NP education by healthcare professionals.
- Medications prescribed to treat NP were ineffective.
- Distraction was considered as an effective strategy to manage NP.
- Despite the consequences of SCI, positive mindset was demonstrated by all the participants.
- NP did not interfere with participants’ rehabilitation.

I was hoping to present the findings of this research at the ISCoS conference where healthcare professionals and researchers involved in SCI speciality from all over the world gather to discuss about the new researches and developments in their field. This dream came true

when my abstract was selected for presentation by ISCoS. Despite the selection, it could have been financially challenging to attend the conference without the support from MASCIP, The Paul Kennedy Making a Difference Bursary.



Sunita Maharjan, presenting her research poster at the ISCoS conference , 2019

Presenting my research was not the sole aim of my participation at the ISCoS conference. I have heard that the ISCoS conferences are very inspiring and educational from Dr. Eimear Smith, who has guided me with this research and has recommended me to apply for the Paul Kennedy Bursary. By physically being there for the first time, I got to experience its incredibility. Firstly, I achieved immense knowledge relevant to my clinical practice by attending the lectures/presentations on topics, such as non-pharmacological management of spasticity, managing distress in people with SCI, management of infertility after SCI, respiratory issues and autonomic cardiac dysfunction in SCI. I was hoping to learn about new developments/researches on NP in SCI but this topic was not included in the main lectures/presentations.



Prof. Nancy Brackett, lecture on management of infertility after spinal cord injury



Secondly, it allowed me to network and interact with amazing individuals from around the globe providing different services to people with SCI. At the 'Nurse Meeting' programme, I came across SCI nurses who were passionate to improve SCI nursing care. One of the significant issues raised by the nurses at the meeting was that there is no certified further education programme in SCI nursing internationally. We discussed about connecting SCI nurses and sharing education resources among us through an online media, scinurse.org.

One of the conditions attached to the bursary application was to share my ISCoS conference experience at MASCIP's Annual Conference 'Up to your Neck in it: Life with Tetraplegia' in Loughborough University, 2019. Unfortunately, due to my family circumstances, I was unable to do so. Overall, I am very grateful to MASCIP, The Paul Kennedy Bursary for supporting me to successfully disseminate my research on NP experiences of patients with SCI at the ISCoS conference.