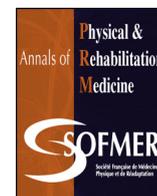




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## Letter to the editor

### Promoting the development and visibility of primary research in rehabilitation: Labs and My Rehab Thesis sessions in European Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine 2018 Congress



Dear Editor. The European Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ESPRM) aims to support the development and visibility of primary research in rehabilitation, described as the performance of actual studies in the 3 main areas of basic, clinical, and epidemiological research [1]. For promoting rehabilitation relevant primary research, the scientific program of the 2016 ESPRM congress was the first to incorporate Research Laboratories (Labs) and My Rehab Thesis (MRT) sessions. The success of these sessions at this congress led to their organization in subsequent ESPRM congresses.

In the Labs session, heads of research facilities or their representatives disseminate their research activities in 10 minutes, including the description of their units, research programs, tools, methods, and main results. In the MRT session, PhD students in any rehabilitation-relevant discipline present their theses in a very short time (180 seconds) in an attractive and widely understandable manner with a single Microsoft PowerPoint slide. The aim of these sessions is to give the opportunity to recognize diverse research possibilities for rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities; improve connections between researchers, clinicians and PRM trainees; create a network of researchers involved in disability; and improve quality in rehabilitation research in different aspects including translational and interdisciplinary/interprofessional research, keeping in mind the association between research and sustainable development. MRT sessions had the added aim of enhancing professional development in presenting research for PhD students as well as motivation for research in rehabilitation for others while promoting scientific popularization.

#### 1. Organization of the Labs and MRT sessions at the 2018 congress

The ESPRM works systematically in various ways to achieve its aim of the development and visibility of primary research. First, the ESPRM makes efforts to network with research facilities. Within the operational structure of the ESPRM, each ESPRM special-interest scientific committee develops networks with research laboratories or teams in their fields. The ESPRM also signs letters of intent to cooperate with research laboratories/networks. These efforts paved the way toward the successful organization of Labs and MRT sessions in ESPRM congresses.

The preparations for Labs and MRT sessions in the 2018 congress dated back to January 2017 with the plans and guidance of the ESPRM president, Prof. Alain Delarque, on creating a list of heads of research facilities as well as PhD students. The lists

of potential participants were created from the available research-facility contacts of the ESPRM and recommendations of the special-interest scientific committee chairs. Also, the Internet was searched for research centers involved in research of individuals with disabilities as well as MEDLINE via PubMed for robust rehabilitation-relevant research. We also had inspirations from congress speakers with good rehabilitation research. Moreover, congresses served as a significant milieu for announcing these sessions and inviting researchers to participate. As planned, the ESPRM was included in the “Best of Posters” session with 2 representatives as jury members in the 32nd Congress of the French Society of PRM (SOFMER) in Nancy, France in 2017, and young researchers were invited to the MRT session at the ESPRM 2018 congress.

Furthermore, a specific section was allocated to MRT sessions on the ESPRM 2018 congress website to encourage eligible PhD students to submit abstracts for the session.

Given the key role of scientific journals in the development and dissemination of research, a session involving editors-in-chiefs of rehabilitation journals was planned.

##### 1.1. Preparation phase

A total of 101 heads of research facilities were contacted to request participation in the Labs session and to encourage their PhD students to present in the MRT session. Meanwhile, separate emails were sent to more than 90 PhD students to invite them to the MRT session and to submit abstracts.

After the abstract submission, scientific programs of the Labs and MRT sessions along with the abstracts were posted at the ESPRM 2018 congress website (<http://www.esprm2018.com/preliminary-program>).

#### 2. Sessions during the ESPRM 2018 congress

##### 2.1. Labs session

The Labs session consisted of an entire day of scientific activity on May 3 comprising three 2-hour sessions accommodating 29 presentations relevant to the research activities of distinguished researchers involved in research of individuals with disabilities. The session hosted researchers from 19 countries including Austria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Israel, Lithuania, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, and Spain with one presenter; Belgium, Sweden, and The Netherlands with 2 presenters; France and Turkey with 3 presenters; and Italy with 4 presenters. Scientific and professional backgrounds of the researchers were diverse and included basic, medical, rehabilitation, and technical sciences and 10 different professions consisting of medical doctors (PRM and others), doctors in basic sciences,

other rehabilitation professionals, and engineers in different fields. Research areas included basic, translational, and clinical research incorporating all 5 distinct fields of human functioning research [2] with a broad range of topics encompassing muscle physiology, disease/pathology mechanisms, human cognition, human movement, rehabilitation in various neurological disorders (including robotic rehabilitation), musculoskeletal rehabilitation, biomechanics, biomechanics, and development of assessment tools.

## 2.2. MRT session

Twenty PhD students from different disciplines participated in the MRT session. European countries were represented broadly with presenters from 12 countries including Austria, Croatia, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, The Netherlands, and Ukraine with one participant; Norway and Belgium with 2 participants; Romania with 3 participants; and France with 5 participants. Twelve PRM physicians, 1 sports medicine physician, 1 neurologist, 4 physical therapists, 1 clinical neuropsychologist, and 1 engineer in cognitive ergonomics successfully presented their theses on basic and clinical sciences, with topics ranging from spasticity in rats to exercise, robotic gait training, biomechanics, transcranial direct current stimulation, botulinum toxin injections, musculoskeletal ultrasonography, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, driving rehabilitation, tele-rehabilitation, and bone microarchitecture.

Two juries, the Academic Jury and the Trainees' Jury evaluated the presentations to select the winners. The Academic Jury had a systematic and repeatable structure and consisted of the presidents of major PRM bodies or representatives nominated by the presidents (ESPRM, International Society of PRM, the PRM Section and PRM Board of the European Union of Medical Specialists), representatives of participating societies (Royal Belgian Society of PRM and SOFMER), the president of the national society hosting the congress (Lithuanian Society of PRM), and editors or representatives of PRM journals (American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation and European Journal of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine).

The Trainees' Jury consisted of 1 trainee for a country participating in the ESPRM 2018 congress. The idea behind the Trainees' Jury was to increase the participation of trainees in research sessions, familiarize them with good research in rehabilitation, and encourage them to pursue PhD studies. Nine trainees acted as Jury members.

At the end of the session, 3 winners were selected by the Academic Jury and 1 winner by the Trainees' Jury. The 3 winners were Marjorie Kerzoncuf from the Institut des neurosciences de la Timone, Marseille, France; Stijn Bogaerts from the Department of Development and Regeneration, KU Leuven/Department of PRM, University Hospitals, Leuven, Belgium; and Juultje Sommers from Amsterdam Movement Sciences, The Netherlands. The winner of the Trainees' Jury was again Marjorie Kerzoncuf. The relevant publications of the 3 winners are in the reference list [3–5].

The winners were presented at the Presidents and Editors-in-Chief session: Research in Rehabilitation - Part 1.

## 3. Editors-in-Chief sessions

ESPRM efforts for research are relayed by European journals of rehabilitation [6]; several are ranked in the top of the rehabilitation category of Journal Citation Reports: Annals of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (Impact Factor 3.4; 6/65), Clinical Rehabilitation (Impact Factor 2.9; 11/65), European Journal of

Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (Impact Factor 2.2; 16/65), and Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine (Impact Factor 1.8; 29/65). Editors of the journals were invited to present their advances at the Editors-in-Chief session. At this session, they explained how they promote and disseminate research in rehabilitation [7–9] in line with the development of science and research in PRM in Europe as described in the White Book on PRM [6,10] and in the world with progressively increasing clinical trials and publications [11] at a greater rate than that in other fields [12].

## 4. Post-congress activities

The Information and Communication Committee of the ESPRM facilitates the visibility of scientific activities including research in rehabilitation via newsletters sent to its members and via its website, and Facebook and twitter posts.

The abstracts of the 3 winners of the MRT session are displayed on the ESPRM website in the newsletter (<http://webdogs.pl/newsletters/winners.html>), which includes the biographies of the winners as well as the links with research teams to increase the visibility of primary research relevant to rehabilitation.

The Information and Communication Committee also created newsletters about the presentation relevant to the Labs session (“Synthesis of the Labs session”) and MRT awards in the Presidents and Editors-in-Chief sessions.

## 5. Conclusions

The Labs and MRT sessions in the ESPRM 2018 congress gathered together distinguished researchers and PhD students. The sessions fulfilled their aims of improving connections with researchers and recognizing diverse research possibilities in rehabilitation. The efforts of the ESPRM will increasingly continue to fulfill the call of the World Health Organization, “Rehabilitation 2030: a call for action”, regarding “coordinated and concerted global action towards strengthening rehabilitation,” highlighting research capacity building as one of the 10 areas for action to strengthen rehabilitation [13] in close cooperation with other PRM bodies to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

## Disclosure of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interest.

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