

OARSI Travel Scholarship

My OARSI travel scholarship funded a four-week visit to Melbourne, Australia, in November 2025. My scholarship was hosted by the Centre for Health, Exercise & Sports Medicine (CHESM) at the University of Melbourne, under the supervision of Associate Professor Kade Paterson. At present, I am a podiatrist and HEE/NIHR Clinical Doctoral Research Fellow based at Leeds Institute of Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Medicine, University of Leeds. My current fellowship focuses on standardising outcomes for clinical trials involving patients with foot and ankle disorders in rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases, in conjunction with the international outcome measures initiative, OMERACT. The research that was funded through the OARSI scholarship builds on this, specifically addressing the lack of evidence relating to foot and ankle osteoarthritis.

Firstly, my scholarship involved working on a mixed-methods project aiming to recommend a consensus-derived set of performance-based tests of physical function for patients with foot osteoarthritis (OA). During my time in Melbourne, I gained experience in designing and conducting this study with world-leading osteoarthritis researchers, including writing a protocol and ethics application, and conducting a literature review to identify the measurement properties of performance-based tests. Additionally, my OARSI scholarship involved working on an ongoing project that aims to develop classification criteria for foot and ankle osteoarthritis. During my visit I completed a scoping review of existing classification criteria, which will inform a future consensus study.

I attended CHESM team meetings during my time in Melbourne and benefitted from meeting team members at different stages of their research journeys, and learning about the different projects and PhDs taking place. I also had the opportunity to present both the work I was doing as part of my OARSI scholarship and my wider research journey to the CHESM team. Outside of CHESM, I enjoyed visiting La Trobe University where I met with one of my fellowship collaborators, Professor Hylton Menz, and his colleagues, and linked to another PhD student working in the field of foot osteoarthritis (and enjoyed a tour of Melbourne's Yarra Trails).

I am incredibly thankful to have received an OARSI Travel Scholarship; it was an unforgettable experience that strengthened existing collaborations and led to new networks. I am certain that these will be invaluable as I progress in my postdoctoral research career. I am also very grateful for the facilitation of my (over)consumption of the best coffee in the world!