

OARSI Travel Scholarship Report

My OARSI Travel Scholarship funded a 6-week research visit to the United Kingdom, split between the University of Oxford and Keele University. During my stay I was supervised by Dr Phillipa Nicolson (Nuffield Department of Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences (NDORMS), University of Oxford, and Physiotherapy Research Unit, Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre), and Professor Melanie Holden (School of Medicine, Keele University). Together, we worked on the INCLUDE OA project, which has two aims: 1) to evaluate the existing evidence for diversity, equity, and inclusion in non-knee OA randomised controlled trials, and 2) to create researcher actions to enhance inclusion, equity, and diversity of OA clinical research.

During my stay I worked closely with Dr Nicolson, Prof Holden, and the OARSI Rehabilitation Discussion Group to conduct a systematic review evaluating diversity and inclusion in published OA randomised controlled trials (RCTs). During my visit we completed screening and data extraction of 103 RCTs evaluating non-surgical and non-pharmacological interventions in non-knee OA. This work has resulted in a manuscript, which is currently being prepared for publication and has been submitted as a conference abstract for the 2027 OARSI World Congress.

We also presented our systematic review results to two patient and public involvement (PPI) groups. We worked together with these groups to co-create a list of researcher actions that could enhance inclusivity of future OA clinical trials. We aim to continue this work at the 2027 OARSI World Congress by using similar co-creation methods to refine the list of researcher actions with the OARSI Rehabilitation Discussion Group. We hope to publish our work as a practical guide to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in OA clinical research.

OARSI funding provided me with a valuable opportunity to develop my skills in conducting a systematic review within a large, international team of collaborators. It also enabled me to gain practical experience in planning and facilitating patient and public involvement (PPI) groups, and in engaging with people from diverse backgrounds to ensure their perspectives are considered throughout the research cycle. Funding also helped me to establish connections with osteoarthritis (OA) researchers across both institutions, which have already led to new collaborations between our research groups. The opportunity to learn directly from

researchers at both sites broadened my understanding of different approaches to clinical research and strengthened my research skills, particularly in incorporating meaningful PPI into the research process. Overall, the funding has contributed to both my professional development and the establishment of international research relationships that will continue to benefit my work in OA research. My hosts and the teams at both universities were incredibly welcoming, and I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity. As an early-career researcher, I have confidence that support from OARSI will have direct benefits in my research career, by strengthening my track record and enhancing my training.