



ISHANKA MUNUGODA

2018 Collaborative Scholarship Summary



OARSI COLLABORATIVE SCHOLARSHIP – 2018

Ishanka Munugoda



OARSI COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP - 2018

- I was fortunate to receive the OARSI collaborative scholarship in 2018, during the third year of my PhD at Menzies Institute for Medical Research, Tasmania, Australia. This gave me the opportunity to visit the Institute of Anatomy at the Paracelsus Medical University (PMU) in Salzburg, Austria to work with Prof. Felix Eckstein and Dr. Wolfgang Wirth for four months.
- At PMU, I was able to work on two research projects utilising an innovative 3D computational technique to quantitatively assess the meniscus morphology and position (extrusion) in osteoarthritis on Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). Using this advanced technology, we conducted studies on the Intensive Diet and Exercise for Arthritis (IDEA) trial and the Osteoarthritis Initiative (OAI) to evaluate the effects of obesity on meniscus morphology and position as well as the impact of diet and exercise interventions in progressing knee osteoarthritis.
- Over my stay of four months at the PMU, I was able to gain a diverse set of skills as a PhD candidate including the use of this advanced image analysis method. It also gave me a unique opportunity to learn from a group of tremendously experienced researchers in the field of osteoarthritis on different study designs and methodologies. Prof. Eckstein and his team were enormously helpful and conducted several learning sessions such as lectures and research meetings which provided a wonderful platform to discuss complex research concepts and innovative ideas as well as to exchange constructive feedback on topics discussed, which stimulated learning and improved understanding.

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, flowing red ribbons or bands, positioned in the bottom-left corner of the slide.

OARSI COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP 2018

- I was also able to experience the daily activities of another research institution, that has enabled me to learn different strategies and approaches which are used to successfully manage complex and high-quality health research. Additionally, I was given the chance to attend a short course of anatomical dissections of musculoskeletal systems conducted by the Institute of Anatomy during my visit to PMU. Following this visit, there are several initiatives in place for ongoing collaborative projects between my home institution and the PMU.
- Outside of research, this visit gave me the chance to learn and experience a different culture in a deeper sense and make new friends both in and out of research. Prof. Eckstein and the team introduced me to several social events and activities which made my stay a very pleasant, enjoyable and an interesting one.
- With that note, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to OARSI for giving me this invaluable opportunity. The OARSI collaborative research award is immensely useful for early-career and young researchers to learn from leading, expert researchers and to experience different research groups/labs that will broaden the prospects as emerging scientists. Importantly, these will facilitate collaborations between research institutions as well as individual researchers to bring together novel ideas and approaches to conduct cutting-edge research in the field of osteoarthritis.

