

Summary of research achievements and outcomes

The Helen Bearpark Memorial Scholarship afforded me the opportunity to travel from the University of Auckland (Auckland, New Zealand) to The University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, USA) to attend an Advanced Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBTI) course. The course is run by the faculty of the Behavioral Sleep Medicine Program at the Perelman School of Medicine who are internationally known experts in the field. This course is not offered in the Southern Hemisphere.

The travel was also a chance to meet in person with a new research collaborator from the University of Pennsylvania and to further refine and develop ideas for an upcoming significant grant application. In addition, it was an opportunity to explore new research ideas with faculty and to establish some connections between researchers and educators at the two universities.

Research report and outcomes

Attending the Advanced Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBTI) course allowed me to build on my existing skills and knowledge regarding the behavioural (non-drug) treatment of insomnia. This has enabled me to reflect upon my own clinical practice with patients in Primary Care and consider how I can optimise patient treatment, particularly in more complex cases. Enhancing my own skills and participating in the course from an educational perspective has also allowed me to develop ideas about how best to teach the clinical skills of behavioural sleep medicine to clinicians in Primary Care in my local setting. This is relevant to my academic role as a clinical educator and researcher. In addition, it has provided me the platform to progress to the more individually tailored Penn mini fellowship in behavioural sleep medicine. I hope to participate in this fellowship in the future to develop my expertise and focus in the area of sleep in women.

One of the benefits of having the opportunity to attend courses in person is the meeting of like-minded clinicians and researchers. Discussing common concerns, differing approaches, research ideas, and interests with my fellow course attendees was an enriching and invigorating experience. An outcome of this is a research collaboration with a group of clinicians interested in both sleep education for health professionals and the delivery of sleep services in the oncology and cancer survivorship setting. This collaboration has led to the planning of local research looking at sleep education for General Practitioners and the planning of a future conference symposium session regarding sleep education for health professionals. In addition, through networking, I now have connection to others interested in behavioural sleep medicine in the specific area I am currently researching.

I was also able to meet in person a new research collaborator of mine. We had the time between the course sessions to share ideas and plan future research. I found these opportunities for personal connection meaningful on both a professional and personal level.

Overall, I plan to use the learning and collaboration from the travel to inform two upcoming significant research grants.