



## **Lynsey McClean** **International Travel Award 2017**

Lynsey McClean received a 2017 International Travel Award from the Royal College of Occupational Therapists to support attendance at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) annual conference and centennial celebration March 30<sup>th</sup> – April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 in Philadelphia, PA.

Lynsey, who currently works as a rotational occupational therapist at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital (RNOH) on the oncology orthopaedic team, presented the results of her MSc Dissertation at the AOTA Conference through a poster session.

Lynsey jointly completed research on 'Occupational Therapists Views of Their Colleagues with Seen and Unseen Disabilities' with her research partner Aoife Quille. Lynsey's research focused on: recruitment of occupational therapists with disabilities and impairments; potential benefits and issues around employment; and disclosure to colleagues.

Lynsey's research poster was positively received, by occupational therapists and military staff, particularly for including 'unseen' impairments and disabilities. Lynsey attended the 'Network of Occupational Therapy Practitioners with Disabilities and their supporters' (NOTPD) meeting being held during the conference and met with occupational therapists from Chicago and North Dakota who are conducting similar research. This has led to an international collaboration to publish a popular culture article on these issues with the aim to make the general public more aware of employment of people with impairments and disabilities.

Following her attendance at the AOTA conference, Lynsey presented to attendees of Brunel University's 'Occupational Therapy Student Conference' and hosted an open evening forum at the RNOH on 'Raising awareness of the benefits and dispelling myths around employing health care professionals with seen and unseen impairments'. Attendees of these events discussed potential benefits and issues around employment of occupational therapists with impairments or disabilities, and debated whether people should disclose their condition or inform employers of adaptations needed without disclosing their condition.

Michelle Hodgkinson, from the Equality Achievement Network, was invited to the RNOH event and discussed equality in the workplace and what the network has done in the past few years to help achieve this. A member of RNOH staff discussed their personal experience of working with a physical impairment.

Lynsey is very grateful for the opportunities that the international travel funding award has led to. Attending and presenting a poster at the AOTA conference provided Lynsey with the opportunity to: develop her skills of presenting a poster at a conference; demonstrate to US occupational therapists what is currently happening in this field in the UK; create American contacts for further international research. Subsequently, Lynsey will jointly present a poster on the 'US and UK experiences of occupational therapists with impairments and disabilities', with Sandy Hanebrink, chair of the NOTPD, at the World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) conference 2018. Lynsey's own research has also been accepted as a poster session at the WFOT conference. Lynsey and her research colleagues aim to publish this research in a peer reviewed journal in 2018.

Lynsey would like to give special thanks to the Royal College of Occupational Therapy for their financial support which enabled her to gain this unique experience.