

76th FIP Congress: Perspectives from a Young Filipino Pharmacist

Yearly, the FIP Foundation for education and research awards congress scholarships to support pharmacists from different regions of the world to develop in line with the objectives of the foundation. The application process involves online submission of documents required by the foundation together with recommendation letters from the applicant's supervisors or officers of professional organizations. It would be helpful to highlight in the application documents, the applicant's engagement in the profession and how the congress would be able to help out in their future plans.



Figure 1. FIP Congress Travel Grant Scholarship Awardees (L-R): Alemayehu Bernahe (Ethopia), Ijeoma Okafor (Nigeria), Belma Pehlivanovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) Ismeet Kaur (India), Agnes Gossenheimer (Brazil) and Cristan Agaceta (Philippines)



Figure 2. Some of the outputs of my engagements with PPhA and YPG Philippines

As a young pharmacist in the Philippines, I am very fortunate to have been working with the Philippine Pharmacists Association (PPhA) for the past few years. I started being active in the PPhA as a student-volunteer during PPhA activities through my then professors, Mr. Roderick Salenga and Mr. Paul Quizon, who are now board members of PPhA. In 2014, I started working with PPhA as an assistant of Dean Yollie Robles and Ma'am Leonie Ocampo in the development of the Competency Assessment Tools for the TESDA Pharmacy Services NC III together with 2 other young pharmacists, 2015 FIP Congress scholar Diane Aninon and the PPhA South Metro chapter President Isaac Linatoc. This is probably the most important work that I had done with PPhA as this is now being cascaded all throughout the Philippines as the standard training program for pharmacy support workforce and will be ladderized to the new 5-year outcomes-based pharmacy curriculum. Aside from Pharmacy Services NC III, I have also shared my non-pharmaceutical skills (i.e. digital design, desktop publishing, etc.) in various PPhA programs and projects. Looking forward, I aim to continue my engagements with the PPhA and hopefully I may be able to participate in the development of the 5-year BS pharmacy curriculum & development of tools for the continuing professional education of pharmacists.

This year Su Su from China and myself were the congress scholars from the western pacific region. For those who are not yet familiar with the FIP World Pharmacy Congress, it is the annual gathering of pharmacists all over the world serving as a platform to share developments and advancements within the profession. From the perspective of a first-timer like me, the FIP World Pharmacy Congress provides an opportunity to:

- Learn from pharmacists all over the world
- Expand your network within the pharmacy profession
- Meet new friends and experience different culture
- Travel to different cities in the world



Figure 3. FIP Congress Scholars from WPPF Cristan Agaceta (Philippines) and Su Su (China) with John Jackson (WPPF President, in the center)

With these learning opportunities during the congress, it is truly an experience that could contribute to our professional and personal growth!



Figure 5. The learning sessions during the FIP Congress include topics related to Social Determinants of Health, Novel Tools for prevention and Treatment, Diagnostics and adherence, Sustainable and affordable global health and other topics for targeted interest

There were at least 50 learning sessions categorized into 4 themes that one can choose from during the 6-day congress. This had me wishing that I can split into several bodies to be able to attend to each and every one of them. But of course, that is impossible so you have to prioritize topics that will be relevant to your practice and interest. Each session may also have variations in format and you will always have opportunity to interact with the speakers through an open forum or personally approach them at the end of the sessions. You can exchange business cards, email or even twitter or facebook. You may also take selfies with the speakers if you like, everyone is very friendly. Aside from the formal sessions, there are a lot of opportunities to learn from other pharmacists informally as well. After each day of the congress, there would be social gatherings and reception dinners that would allow you to meet pharmacists from other countries or catch-up with old friends if you are a regular attendee.



Figure 4.. Expanding network during FIP Congress is easy as there are various opportunities such as Business meetings, YPG party, Fun Run and Receptions

As a first-timer, I took all the opportunities to gain new friends and expand my network during the congress. I participated in business meetings, parties and even in the fun run. It was always a delight to learn fresh perspectives from pharmacist from other countries of different background and varying

experiences. Sharing a common passion with them was truly an inspiring experience. It made me want to do more and be more as a Filipino Pharmacist.

The congress is also a good opportunity to explore different places and experience different culture as the FIP World Pharmacy Congress is held in different cities of the world every year. Last year it was in Germany, this year in Buenos Aires, Argentina and next year will be in Seoul, South Korea.

If I have to highlight a specific learning from the sessions I have attended, I will definitely choose the parallel session about in-pharmacy screening methods. Pharmacist Juan Hoyos Miller shared their experience on HIV rapid screening test which pharmacists are already doing in Spain while Pharmacist Ally Anderson shared their practice on anti-microbial stewardship in community pharmacies in several states in the US. To be honest, I was a bit envious of how advanced the pharmacists' roles have evolved in these countries compared to us in the Philippines, but then later on I realized that it is not impossible to attain this in the Philippines as I remember the provisions on the expanded roles of the pharmacist in the new Pharmacy Law. Alas! Soon, the Filipino pharmacist can do more, and be more.



Figure 6. Pharmacist Juan Hoyos Miller presenting their work on in-pharmacy rapid testing in Spain.

There were several other interesting sessions during the congress, and it would be impossible to summarize all the lessons I gained from my first FIP World Congress. But after the congress I have realized many things. For one, as a pharmacist from a developing country such as the Philippines, I cannot over-emphasize the importance of learning the basic and essential things as a pharmacist. The formative years of studying pharmacy may not make us instant experts, but ensuring we learn the fundamental concepts that will enable us to become capable pharmacist is the foundation of developing and promoting pharmacy practice in a society that seems to have had forgotten the important roles of a pharmacist. Moreover, while many countries are ahead of us, there are also many who are excitedly looking at our progress. It's very important that we be grounded with our currently reality and never be afraid to continuously learn—as a person, as a profession and as a nation. I also found a much greater appreciation to the leaders of the previous generation that has done great work in making it possible for us young pharmacist to be the change that we want.



In ending, there would be three key messages that I would like to share as a product of my experience in the FIP Congress. First, I would encourage everyone to be active in the profession and the professional organization. It is often easier to wait for things to happen, or sometimes it's easier for us to complain about our situation and be critical of others than work towards transformation. I believe this is not efficient. I will have to mention it again, let's be the change that we want. Our ideas cannot change the world if they stay as ideas. Secondly, I will also suggest that you follow your passion,

dedicate yourself to a cause, and put your heart in service of the profession and do all these things with integrity and excellence and opportunities will come knocking at your door. Finally, be thankful. By acknowledging the direct and indirect contributions of all the people around you for your personal growth or for the growth of the profession, we will always be striving to give back. As more people try to give back, the more people will be united in uplifting our profession. It may never be easy, but it will be worth it.