

Worldwide networking without leaving the house. Reflections on the 35th Annual Conference of the European Health Psychology Society.

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It was a great honor, opportunity, and privilege to be among those awarded the 2021 EHPS Conference grant.

As a post-baccalaureate researcher, this grant allowed me to attend my first international conference, where I presented my research on vitiligo-related stigma and psychosocial functioning. The ways in which health psychology tackles global challenges, this year's conference theme, was prevalent throughout the many symposia, oral presentations, or poster sessions I attended. A major global issue incorporated throughout the conference was the current COVID-19 pandemic, bringing to light the important role that health psychologists in the prevention and promotion of better health.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak placed cities under lockdown worldwide two years ago, we have experienced plenty of challenges in all aspects of our lives. One particular change was the tradition of presenting our research among our colleagues in person and physically networking with one another to broaden our connections. Personally, this was the first time I could showcase my research internationally among my peers without taking a plane across an ocean. While traveling to Slovakia to present my research is still a goal of mine, I cannot dismiss the innovative platform EHPS created for its participants. Receiving the 2021 EHPS Conference grant allowed me to experience what a typical in-person poster session may not provide: the priceless experience of networking with other scholars amidst a global pandemic who

question behavioral medicine utilizing a comprehensive framework. Plus, our current circumstances provide for fascinating conversations against a common public health threat.

In the poster session, I presented a systematic review on stigma related to having a chronic skin disease, vitiligo, and associated psychosocial functioning. The conference's unique format allowed me to sit in on many presentations and posters sessions virtually, present my research to more than two dozen people at once, and collaboratively discuss my findings and future considerations at the end of my presentation. It also allowed me to discuss how my colleagues and I worked together, creating a sense of normalcy and collaboration that was necessary to address the poster session's theme: Coping with Chronic Illness, led by Dr. Maria Karelka. By having various participants engaged at once, they started to build off one another with constructive comments and questions to consider within my research.

The collaboration of ideas and constructive criticism within an intellectually stimulating group like the EHPS scholars sparked multiple discussions. I simultaneously had conversations about research with those with similar and contrasting interests. Having an open dialogue with other scholars resulted in suggestions for potential future research collaborations. It also highlighted challenges within behavioral medicine that are worth addressing. On a personal note, the conference was an eye-opening and intellectually stimulating experience for me. I have never attended an event that so positively impacted my personal and future professional intellectual

curiosity as a behavioral medicine researcher. Attending EHPS introduced me to the interventions that other researchers propose to aid those coping with chronic illnesses such as inflammatory bowel disease (Bártek & Kupka, 2021), Parkinson's Disease (Manceau et al. 2021). It also addressed the barriers associated with high medication non-adherence populations (Konstantinou et al., 2021).

I am pursuing a doctoral degree in medicine and attending this conference has impacted how I plan to approach future patients. It has given me some insight into possible tailored interventions to improve patient health. By collaborating and speaking with scholars at EHPS, I have further delved into my interest in behavioral medicine while examining the continuous efforts to promote better adjustment to chronic diseases. Health psychology researchers consistently reach new frontiers and translate their findings into practice (that we luckily learned about at the conference). Furthermore, discussing the future of behavioral medicine with scholars was inspiring. It left me feeling excited to further network and contribute to this field of work throughout my career.

I want to graciously acknowledge the EHPS Grant committee, which made my participation at this conference possible. Every aspect of the event was thought-provoking and intellectually stimulating, and it was an honor to be allowed to present my research at an internationally represented conference. I also want to thank Caroline F. Z. Stuhlmann, M.S., Caren Jordan, Ph.D., and Tracey A. Revenson, Ph.D., for guiding me throughout my research no matter what the pandemic threw at us. Lastly, thank you to my fellow EHPS attendees for being so interactive and making the best of the situation at hand.

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