



INTERDEM Academy Fellowship 2017-18 - Mollie Price

Report on Research Exchange

I am a PhD researcher in Psychology at Leeds Beckett University in England. My research is funded by a university scholarship, and explores informal carers of people with comorbid dementia and cancer. My project aims to describe and understand, for the first time, the experiences of informal carers of people with both dementia and cancer, and to identify their unmet support needs to inform psychosocial support interventions and services.

For the first stage of my PhD, I conducted a scoping literature review focused on what is currently known in the literature about caring for a person with more than one chronic illness (i.e. multimorbidity). For the second stage, I conducted a qualitative interview study with unpaid carers of people with comorbid dementia and cancer, focused on exploring their experiences and unique challenges and needs. For the final stage of my PhD, I am using the findings from the qualitative study to inform the development of a psychosocial support service/intervention for carers of people with comorbid dementia and cancer.

Last year, I was awarded an INTERDEM Academy Fellowship for Spring 2018 to visit Dr Anne Marie Mork Rokstad and her colleagues at Aldring og helse (Ageing and Health) in Asker, Norway for three months. The researchers at Aldring og helse have impressive expertise in dementia care and the development and evaluation of successful psychosocial interventions, including those for family carers. Thus, my aim for the fellowship was to gain knowledge and insight to shape the development of the support intervention from the staff at Aldring og helse; to hear about their successful interventions; and to build networks and collaborations with the researchers at Aldring og helse that can continue to grow afterwards.

I began my stay in Norway at the end of April. The majority of my time was dedicated to gaining expert input to inform the development, acceptability and feasibility of a psychosocial intervention for carers of people with comorbid dementia and cancer. Anne Marie provided me with additional supervision and feedback which was extremely valuable, and I met with many different researchers and staff at Aldring og helse to learn about their relevant expertise and research, and to get their feedback and suggestions on my work. For example, I met with researchers with expertise in developing interventions for carers; conducting feasibility studies; cancer treatment of elderly people with comorbidities; qualitative methods; and developing online and e-learning interventions. In contrast to my home institution, I was also able to network with staff at Aldring og helse who have a clinical background, giving me access

to a wide range of different perspectives and expertise. I hope to undertake postdoctoral research into the efficacy of the support intervention and the fellowship has allowed me to develop international networks that encourage opportunities for future collaborations.

I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to present my work to the Aldring og helse researchers at two different locations: Ullevål and Tønsberg. The second presentation I did was broadcast live on the Aldring og helse intranet page. The feedback I received was incredibly helpful and supportive, and the experience helped me to improve my communication skills.

Throughout my time in Norway, I also attended two academic conferences: my first international conference, the 24th Nordic Congress of Gerontology; and the internal Aldring og helse conference at Larvik, where I participated in the PhD forum. At these conferences, I networked with many international researchers in ageing and dementia; I discussed my work with experts in the field; and I was able to expand my subject knowledge and learn of the recent advances within the field, including findings related to an online intervention for carers that was very relevant to my PhD work.

The INTERDEM fellowship provided me with various other valuable opportunities. I was able to gain insight and skills into writing research papers for publication as I proofread English manuscripts for publication by researchers at Aldring og helse during my stay. I was able to visit Alma's House, a demonstration apartment at Aker Sykehus for dementia-friendly technology solutions. Lastly, I was also able to engage in patient and public involvement. I met with a person caring for someone with both dementia and cancer in Norway, to discuss the findings from my interviews and my ideas for developing a support service, to gain their ideas and suggestions. This was really helpful in informing the acceptability of the support service.

During my spare time, I immersed myself in the Norwegian culture. I learnt some Norwegian; celebrated the summer solstice at a public bonfire on the beach; and watched the celebration parade in Oslo for the Norwegian Constitution Day. I explored the city of Oslo, visiting the Opera House, the Storting building (Norwegian Parliament), the Royal Palace, the Viking Ship Museum and Oscarsborg Fortress. Asker is a beautiful, relaxing place and I loved living there. I was lucky to have beautiful weather throughout the entire 3-month stay, so I often went swimming in the local lake or sea.

Since returning, I have used the knowledge and insight I have gained from the fellowship to enrich the development of the support service, and to design my third study exploring the acceptability and feasibility of the service. I have now secured a research partnership with the Alzheimer's Society in the United Kingdom, and I am trialling an online support forum specifically for carers of people with comorbid dementia and cancer on the Alzheimer's Society website. The aim of the new forum is to provide carers of people with dementia and cancer with a social support network of others who understand the unique challenges they may face, and a space for them to seek practical and emotional support and to share their

own experiences. The space will also provide tailored information for this specific comorbidity, and will be used to host Q&A sessions with experts in dementia and cancer.

I would like to say a huge thank you to Anne Marie, who was incredibly welcoming and supportive during my stay. It was lovely getting to know Anne Marie and her colleagues, and I look forward to seeing them again at future international dementia conferences. Thank you to my supervisors at Leeds Beckett University, Laura Ashley, Claire Surr and Brendan Gough, who were very helpful throughout the application process and continued to support me throughout the fellowship. Lastly, thank you to the INTERDEM Academy for giving me this amazing opportunity – I am extremely grateful for the memorable and invaluable experience I had in Norway.