

I am deeply appreciative to have received the Education and Travel Grant offered by CAPSGW to attend the 2023 American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) Annual Meeting in New York City. This grant afforded me the opportunity to enhance my clinical knowledge and meet leaders in our field, not only across the country but across the world. In addition to describing one of the sessions that I found most interesting and impactful, I would also like to discuss how other aspects of the conference were important for my professional and personal development.

AACAP organized numerous wellness sessions throughout the week. For anyone attending future conferences, I highly recommend adding these to your daily schedule. The sessions were enjoyable, relaxing, educational, and provided unique networking opportunities. In New York, I participated in yoga classes, meditations, a group bike ride through Central Park, and an expressive painting workshop. During the yoga and meditation sessions, I reflected on the profound impact these practices can have, particularly when done in group settings, and the need for us to incorporate these experiences into our own lives as well as in our clinical practices. The bike ride and painting workshop not only contributed to my wellness but also fostered connections with other attendees. I had the privilege of meeting psychiatrists from around the world and felt inspired to attend the annual International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP) meeting.

The committee meetings also proved to be excellent forums for getting more involved in AACAP and networking. I attended both the Autism and Intellectual Disability Committee and the Prevention and Promotion Committee. While I greatly enjoy being on the AID listserv and attending the lectures they sponsor, I found the AID Committee meeting more challenging to participate in due to the large number of attendees. In contrast, the Prevention and Promotion Committee was smaller in size, and I enjoyed actively participating and contributing to discussions about issues to be addressed and topics to be highlighted at next year's annual meeting. It was at this meeting that I was able to network more effectively, learning about potential job opportunities after training and creating connections that may lead to future collaboration.

The educational session that I found most impactful emphasized the importance of community-led initiatives, research collaboration with academic and healthcare institutions, and the need for government support to promote community health and well-being, with a focus on mental health services and equity. The session was led by Lisa Fortuna, MD MPH, Andrea Spencer, MD, and Michelle Porche, EdD. These researchers and clinicians highlighted the fact that communities understand themselves and their needs best, and that sustainable change comes from within. Their presentation outlined why there is a need for a shift from community-based participatory research (CBPR), which is what I was taught during my own MPH coursework, to participatory action research (PAR). PAR is an approach to research that prioritizes the value of experiential knowledge for tackling problems caused by unequal and harmful social systems, and for envisioning and implementing alternatives. These concepts are at the core of the newer NIH Community Partnerships to Advance Science for Society (ComPASS) grants, which recognize community leaders and organizations as the experts that they are. Programs supported by

ComPASS grants receive funding over 10 years for study design support, implementation, evaluation, as well as dissemination. The emphasis on dissemination is key, as there is often more than a 10-year gap between publishing and disseminating evidence-based therapies/interventions. From this lecture, I learned about a variety of other grants that could support PAR, including the NIH Director's Pioneer Award, NIH Build Up Trust Challenge, and grants through the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences.

Overall, attending the conference proved to be an excellent educational and career advancement opportunity, and I look forward to attending more AACAP annual conferences in the future.

Written by: J. Nikki Steinsiek, MD MPH