

Atti Anna Rita – Travel Grant recipient - Report

During my study-career my grandmother Ada, fully healthy until 97 years of age, has been my first supporter. Thanks to her I learned how much elderly people can offer to the younger ones!

My name is Anna Rita Atti, I'm from Italy (*Bologna University*) but I carried out most of my research activity in collaboration with Sweden (*Aging Research Centre - Karolinska Institutet*). Getting the IAGG Travel Grant for me has been an honour both as Italian citizen and as Swedish student!

In 1999 I got a Medical Degree from *Ferrara University*, then I completed my medical education with specialisation degree in Internal Medicine (2004) and now I'm a resident in Psychiatry. In my clinical practice I had the great opportunity to work, among others, in a Consulting Room specifically devoted to cognitive disorders. Being in contact with elderly demented patients and their families, I was deeply impressed by the distress caused by such disease and I developed a growing scientific interest on that.

Working on research on prevention and natural history of for dementia at the *Aging Research Centre - Karolinska Institutet* in Stockholm changed my life both from a personal point of view and from a professional perspective. The international group I was working with, the inspiring atmosphere of the centre further increased my enthusiasm and I applied for a PhD degree. Few months ago I defended my doctoral thesis investigating the effect of somatic disorders on brain aging and dementia.

One of the studies included in the thesis, "Cognitive impairment after age 60: the role of medical and social conditions; data from the Faenza Project", has been awarded by IAGG. My co-authors and I have been very pleased for this award. Our paper is based on Italian epidemiological data which demonstrate an independent and combined role of social (low education, low occupation-based socio-economic status, and un-married status) and medical conditions (diabetes, stroke, and depressive symptoms) on cognitive impairment. Such findings suggest the need of attention on the co-occurrence of these conditions in the general population.

Presenting my data at the IAGG conference, I felt proud of the results reached so far but I also felt the urgent need of being ready soon with the longitudinal data we have been collecting in the past few months. Indeed, the conference has been a stimulating and stirring experience. Both the main lectures and the small symposia have been thought-provoking and inspiring: I went home with my bag full of notes on references to read, ideas for new studies, and suggestions for a proper drug use!

Geriatric Epidemiology has to countenance many challenges but prevention and treatment of dementia is indubitably one of the most relevant both in terms of human lives and public health costs. My personal challenge for the future is to be able to give scientific answers to questions arising from my daily clinical practice. Further, the rigorous application of the scientific method I learned in research to my clinical work would hopefully result in a better care of my patients.