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Patricia Halpin, Assistant Professor of Life Sciences, UNHM travels to Brazil

Patricia A. Halpin

University of New Hampshire, Patricia.Halpin@unh.edu

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UNH Global

Patricia Halpin

Assistant Professor, Life Sciences Department, UNHM - Brazil

International academic accomplishments

The International Union of Physiological Sciences (IUPS) holds its conference every four years. In 2017, I had the opportunity to attend the 38th IUPS World Congress, *Rhythms of Life*, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as one of 1500 participants from 56 other countries and the United States. Following the Congress, I joined a group of fellow physiologists for a 3.5-hour bus ride to attend the ADInstruments Teaching Workshop, *Teaching and Learning for Better Education*, in Búzios, Brazil, northeast of Rio. The Workshop had 146 participants from 22 different countries.

Upon first arriving in Brazil, I attended a pre-meeting, the International Early-Career Symposium (IECS) 2017, *From Basic to Transitional Physiology*, at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. I accompanied my colleague, Barbara Goodman from U. South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, who gave a workshop on physiology outreach to assistant professors and postdoctoral research fellows at the University. She presented some of the work from a recent paper (Stieben M, Halpin PA,



Patricia Halpin (wearing white UNH tee shirt in front row right) at IUPS Teaching Workshop Diversity party

and Matyas ML, 2017), *Developing a Nationwide K-12 Outreach Model: Physiology Understanding (PhUn) Week 10 Years Later*, and I assisted participants in the workshop activity on thermoregulation during exercise.

The World Congress started the following day, and I presented a poster, *Performing Outreach Internationally: Easy Steps for Success*. This poster was co-authored by Marsha L. Matyas and Margaret Stieben of the American Physiological Society Education Office. It focused on the outreach I had done in the summers of 2014 and 2015 in Melbourne, Australia, teaching exercise physiology to primary school students. The poster encouraged others to perform outreach by demonstrating that it is an easy and a worthwhile endeavor.

During the week I attended the Congress, I met many of the participating physiologists and learned more about their work. I attended several sessions where we discussed the challenges of teaching physiology to undergraduates and medical school students.

At the ADInstruments Workshop in Búzios, I co-presented with Camillo de Lellis-Santos of the Federal University of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Our session, *Using Social Media and Smartphone Applications in Practical Lessons to Enhance Student Learning and Engagement*.

Impact of Teaching and Research

Throughout the poster session at the World Congress in Rio, I networked with other physiologists and encouraged them to perform outreach with K-12 students in their respective countries. Upon my return I learned that for the first time physiologists from Pakistan had registered to participate in outreach.

At the ADInstruments Workshop in Búzios, our session had full capacity attendance. All participants were engaged and excited to learn something new. My colleague Camillo de Lellis-Santos and I used three different languages (English, Portuguese, and Spanish) to guide our participants through the activities. The impact of our work was significant, as immediately after the session ended we were invited by participants to travel to their various countries and give the same interactive presentation. Later in the day, several people came up to me and said, "I am sorry I missed your session, I heard it was great. Please tell me more about it." Camillo and I will be submitting a manuscript on our workshop to *Advances in Physiology Education* and we will be collaborating on new projects in the future.

At this three-day Teaching Workshop I also attended some interesting sessions. I will be using the techniques I learned from the *The Use of Digital Story Telling in Teaching Physiology* session in one of my spring 2018 courses to help students reflect on their learning. I also attended the session, *The Use of Dramatization to Teach Physiology*. During this session we all had roles to play to demonstrate the cardiac cycle. It was chaotic, loud, fun, and eventually very successful. I will use this in at least two of my future courses.

I was asked to be a poster judge at the Teaching Workshop, and this provided me with an opportunity to talk in depth with the poster presenters. Some were very nervous about giving their presentations in English (all were Brazilians). I reassured them, advising them that giving their presentation to me in English was good practice and I encouraged them to take their time. This was my first experience as a poster judge, and it was rewarding because I got to guide the presenter through their work and I really appreciated their enthusiasm.

Cultural Immersion

Before going on this trip I had traveled to several foreign countries. The main difference with this trip was that I was heading to country where I did not know the language, and this caused me a bit of trepidation. Upon arriving in Rio de Janeiro, I found it surprising that few folks spoke English, in the city, the hotel or the convention center. As English is the language of science, and as this was a World Congress, it was expected that most of the staff would speak English. To be able to communicate, I resorted to my high school Spanish daily, and we also learned and used some common phrases in Portuguese: “Good morning” (“Bom dia”), “Good evening” (“Bom noite”), and “Thank you” (“Obrigado/a”). Later in Búzios, I was surprised to find how many more people did speak English, in the town, the hotel, and the conference center. My roommate at both venues knew only German, so she relied on me to help guide us in our travels. When I returned to Logan Airport in Boston, I found that I was still using the Portuguese phrases I had learned.

During our stay two of my U.S. colleagues and I were lucky to have my colleague Camillo take us on a wonderful tour of Rio de Janeiro. We travelled by Uber to see the Christ the Redeemer statue at Corcovado and along the way he pointed out areas of interest including some of the Summer Olympic sites, the famous Ipanema beach and where the singer-song writer saw the famous Girl of Ipanema walking down the beach. The temperatures throughout our trip were from 70-85°F and this was during the winter! We saw the famous Copacabana beach and stopped to have lunch in a restaurant across the street from the sand. Camillo guided us through ordering traditional Brazilian

dishes and we were not disappointed as everything was delicious. We took the tram to see the Christ statue and the view was spectacular. We could see Sugarloaf, the Olympic soccer stadium, the beautiful waterfront and nearby mountains. Being at the Christ made me feel like I had officially arrived in Rio de Janeiro. Camillo had been there three previous times and this was the first time the weather had been clear with a spectacular view so we told him we brought him good luck with the weather.

The final evening in Rio, we went to a Pizza Festival at a nearby restaurant where the server brings one or two types of pizza to the tables and you can choose to take a slice or decline until the next selection arrives. We even had a chocolate pizza for dessert. It was a delicious and interesting dinner.

Rio de Janeiro is a large and busy city. There is constant traffic and with most people having small cars it adds to the congestion on the highways. One unique part of the experience on the highways was that while many of the cars changed lanes without signaling there was never a car horn honked. All the drivers seemed patient with the traffic and took it in stride. I think that patience could be used on our US highways as well.


Conclusions


Attending these meetings and becoming part of the international community of physiologists has whetted my appetite for more travel and collaborations with new colleagues. Having our workshop so heavily attended really confirmed to me that there is interest in how we use smartphones and social media in the classroom to teach. Several physiologists asked me how I can adapt my use of social media to large class sizes (100-300) and this has inspired me to investigate that specific use in the future.


When talking with colleagues at the teaching workshop I realized that many of the physiology students worldwide have difficulties learning the complex material and as they learn the systems of the body individually there is always the problem of integrating the material. These are the fundamental challenges with teaching students physiology everywhere and we will all continue to share ideas to help increase student understanding of material.

Our students everywhere stand to benefit from our participation in these opportunities to share inquiries and perspectives across borders. I am looking forward to the next IUPS World Congress in Beijing, China, in 2021.

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 Nesmith Hall G25
131 Main Street, Durham, NH 03824


 603.862.2398


 study.abroad@unh.edu (mailto:study.abroad@unh.edu)



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OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS

 Conant Hall 3rd floor
10 Library Way, Durham, NH 03824

 603.862.1288

 oiss@unh.edu (mailto:oiss@unh.edu)

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