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I recall quite vividly the first time I presented a paper in front of an international audience. My hometown, Dar es Salaam, was hosting the 2nd African Spinal Cord Injury Network (AFSCIN) meeting in 2017. The meeting was attended by AFSCIN members from several African countries; I was then a fifth year medical student and had often times during clinical activities felt overwhelmed by the tremendous burden of disease in a low-income country. As a senior student a few months away from graduating, I had already observed the human casualties of a health care system stretched beyond its limits. I came away from the AFSCIN meeting having met a multitude of individuals who had made up their mind to work with whatever resources they had at their disposal and to share their experiences in order that African spinal cord injury care may prosper.

The Travel Scholars program for the World Congress of Surgery 2019 promoted similar values and I wished to be part of a group promoting exchange of education on an international platform. Although the Congress hosted an international attendance with widely diverse topics, I was more amazed by every delegate's common goal; to contribute the best of what they could offer to the practice of surgery.

A few weeks have passed since the Congress concluded however amongst others, there are two talks which I still often reflect on as they portrayed the diversity of topics discussed while at the same time sharing the common theme of simply putting your best foot forward.

The first was a talk by a Swedish Professor sharing his hospital's experience with a mock mass casualty scenario; the highlight being that hospital staff only realized that extra beds stored for such emergencies did not even fit through the Emergency Department doors!

The second was by a Dutch researcher sharing his team's work in Sierra Leone which focused on improving healthcare capacity. They compared the outcome of Caesarean Sections performed by formally trained obstetricians versus those performed by health care workers who had not attended medical school. The talks represented opposite ends of a spectrum however each presenter was simply sharing the work of a team determined to maximize efficiency and deliver the best possible care to patients. Working in a low resource and rural setting like Northern Tanzania often means that clinical decisions and choice of treatment are often determined by available resources or more unfortunately, what the patient can afford. For a junior surgeon, this can be rather disheartening. I came away from the meeting realizing that although Tanzania is several years or even decades away from access to the modern medicine practiced in high income countries, there is nothing stopping us from perfecting our practice with the resources we have at our disposal.

I have developed a deeper sense of responsibility towards the medical students and junior doctors I work with; to share with them the same ideology and to instill in them work ethics which reflect the same. My outlook on locally relevant research has also expanded; I now aim not only towards producing meaningful results but also constantly envision a manner in which to translate them into clinical practice.

I would not have done this report justice if I did not mention my fellow Travel Scholars. I was privileged to be in the company of individuals from developing nations who faced similar challenges but

were determined to look beyond them. Their passion for surgery was clearly reflected in their achievements and they were certainly an inspiring group of individuals.

There are limited employment opportunities in Tanzania for junior doctors and often a period of volunteer service is required before a paid position can be secured. Due to my interest in neurosurgery, I chose to volunteer my services at a tertiary level hospital in Northern Tanzania. Frugality becomes a way of life and the luxury of international travel is beyond the reach of many who choose to work without remuneration.

The Travel Grant contributed immensely towards making it possible for me to attend the meeting. I must admit, without this award I would have been forced to withdraw my abstract from the Congress. The efforts of Professor Michael Sarr and the ISS towards making the Congress accessible to deserving candidates from developing countries are highly commendable. I sincerely urge potential funders to invest in the future of surgeons who work in challenging conditions and strive to bring surgical care to some of the most impoverished regions in the globe.