

“Express Rather than Impress”: Discussing Challenges in a Peer-group of Early Career Researchers

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Background and Aims

Early career researchers face many challenges—such as securing funding, establishing peer collaborations, confronting doubts and uncertainty concerning research, and identifying career trajectories—and may benefit from discussing these issues with peers. Since 2011, the early career network (yEACH) has coordinated workshops that bring together early career researchers to discuss these challenges and provide constructive advice. Based on literature on early career challenges and feedback from previous attendees, we propose conducting a workshop at ISDM 2017 that focuses on methodological challenges, career development, and networking issues. This workshop’s content builds upon previous delivery at the ISDM 2013 conference and several International Conferences for Communication in Healthcare (ICCH), refining content to best meet participants’ various expressed needs.

Our workshop aims to meet the following learning objectives:

- 1) Master the principles of peer-to-peer support in research and career development.
- 2) Share and receive constructive feedback on research and career challenges.
- 3) Develop networking skills and build international support networks.

Methods to support these aims:

Participants will select attendance in advance, and those who wish to gain the most support from the workshop will submit a short description of their current challenges to facilitators in advance of the workshop. We will ask participants to select a focus area, and we will use these areas to organize participants into small groups. Small groups will engage in facilitated activities to address their needs. Ideally, this workshop will be delivered early in the conference agenda, either as a pre-conference, or during the first day, such that participants have the opportunity to continue networking throughout the remaining time in Lyon.

During the 90 minute workshop, small group focus areas may include:

- 1) Research/Methods: Challenges related to ongoing research projects and methodology.
- 2) Career Development: Challenges related to career (e.g., mentorship, personal-professional balance, job seeking/transitions).
- 3) Networking: Challenges related to networking with others (e.g., developing “elevator speech,” identifying collaborators).

Summary/Conclusion: At the end of this workshop, early career participants interested in shared decision making research will be better positioned to “pitch” their research to senior scientists, engage in networking at this conference and beyond, and find alternative solutions for areas in which they feel challenged in their current projects. Moreover, the workshop will serve as a starting point for accessible peer-to-peer networking with other participants both during and after the conference.