

International Sleep Research Training Program: An Opportunity for Advanced Career Development in Sleep Medicine

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The International Sleep Research Training Program (IS RTP) provides an opportunity for sleep specialists to further develop their research and leadership skills. Established by the World Sleep Society (WSS) in 2020, program mentees spend one year at the best sleep research facilities in the world, collaborating with leading sleep mentors. Over the past two years, mentees have studied at Harvard, Oxford, Stanford, the University of Sydney, Charite University Hospital in Berlin, and the University of Pennsylvania.

According to Allan O'Bryan, WSS executive director, IS RTP is important because the program focuses on "developing the next generation of global sleep leadership." Indeed, mentees from Iran, Switzerland, China, Russia, and South Korea have participated in IS RTP so far. Sleep specialists from all parts of the world are strongly encouraged to apply.

Host country mentors help IS RTP mentees develop and implement their research projects. For example, Dr. Allan Pack finds "IS RTP an appropriate opportunity to train young researchers around the world, and promote sleep medicine in home countries of mentees. IS RTP provides a

good platform for better understanding of international sleep medicine challenges and appropriate development of sleep medicine all around the world according to their available diagnostic and management modalities."

Home country mentors are also a significant part of the program. Dr. Khosro Sadeghniaat Haghighi has been the home country mentor for two mentees so far. He believes that "sleep medicine requires ongoing promotion in both fields of research and practice. In the past two decades, Iran has had a substantial progress in the field of sleep medicine with training of multidisciplinary specialties including occupational medicine, otolaryngology and head and neck surgery, anesthesiology, internal medicine, psychiatry, neurology, pulmonology, and pediatrics. Developing international collaborations by such programs can enhance this global movement towards promotion of sleep medicine and provide appropriate diagnosis and management for patients with sleep disorders."

IS RTP mentees find value in the program. According to Dr. Arezu Najafi, "equal diverse training structure of IS RTP developed by Dr. Kushida along with contribution of his great team of mentors and excellent staff have provided a nourishing scientific platform for implementation of sleep research and clinical practice in home countries of mentees." Dr. Leila Emami

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also believes that "IS RTP has created a great opportunity for sleep scientists and sleep specialists over the world to be able to connect to major academic institutions."

There is also a year-long curriculum that focuses on scientific communication skills, leadership, networking, obtaining grants and publications, entrepreneurship, and career planning. Dr. Mike Mutschelknaus, the curriculum coordinator, enjoys this aspect of IS RTP because "the weekly meetings really allow the mentees to get to know each other, and make those connections that will be so valuable for them in the future."

As part of the program, mentees are also fully funded to go to two international sleep conferences to network and present their research. One conference is the World Sleep Congress (Rome 2022). Mentees choose the other conference to attend through discussions with their mentors.

Admittedly, COVID-19 has restricted travel opportunities and mentee placement during the past year. However, WSS will remain fully committed to meeting the needs of its mentees and helping them achieve their goals. In other words, IS RTP is here to stay.

If you are interested in finding out more about IS RTP, please check out the WSS web site <https://worldsleepsociety.org/>. Look under the program tab. Moreover, feel free to contact Mike if you have questions or need more information. His email is mike@worldsleepsociety.org.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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