The International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services (IAFMHS) annual conference, Vancouver, Canada, 2010

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Thanks to the help of some funding from the Monash University Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, I was able to travel to the IAFMHS conference in Vancouver this year to present my research findings from my Occupational Therapy honours project. The experience was even more beneficial than I had originally thought, and I encourage all students to take any opportunities they have to present at relevant conferences. On an individual level, the conference allowed me to improve my confidence and skill in presenting to unfamiliar audiences, as well as providing me many opportunities to create networks with professionals from across the globe. Over the 3 days, I listened to 33 presentations from Psychologists, Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Psychiatrists, Nurses and Statisticians about emerging problems, trends, technologies and solutions being used in Forensic Mental Health. I learnt a great deal about the importance of early intervention, the protection of incarcerated patients’ rights and the benefits Occupational Therapy has had in reducing recidivism. And likewise, I was able to share my knowledge and research findings about the potential for the Nintendo WiiFit to be used within secure rehabilitation. I spent hours discussing my project, and how other facilities could implement similar interventions, with professionals from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada, Germany, Switzerland and America. Some have since contacted me for further information, and all were excited about testing out our project in their separate countries. Academically speaking, this not only helped me to improve my presentation skills, but has also ensured my research has had a wider effect. Overall, I found the conference a very stimulating environment and I plan to incorporate all my new learning into future practice. And while I did learn a lot, and I enjoyed myself, most importantly, I know the experience will help me become a more informed, global-thinking and academic Occupational Therapist.