

# A journey with ARVO towards professional achievements

By Nina Jovanovic, M.D., MSc, MPH

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2018 around noon I was sitting at ARVO Central in the Hawaii Convention Center exhibit hall with three brilliant young doctors: one from Nigeria, a retinal ophthalmologist; one from Cameroon, a pediatric ophthalmologist; and one from the Philippines, an anterior segment and refractive surgery ophthalmologist. We chatted after a fulfilling and enriching week of at the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) meeting — all four of us re-charged with enthusiasm and motivated to return to our home institutions to pass on the vibrant energy we were infected by from participating at the .



Nina Jovanovic, Wilson Ovienria,  
Luisa Banzon and  
Jeanne Mayouego Kouam

In addition to sharing a profound passion for clinical research in vision and ophthalmology, we all came from developing countries, and through DCERF grant (Developing Countries Eye Research Travel Fellowship) we were



DCERF recipients | Class of 2018

given an opportunity to become part of ARVO. While talking to each other we shared our experiences from other clinical and research meetings and we all agreed that the ARVO meeting is truly a unique and extraordinary event! Despite being a meeting of 12,000 world eye and vision scientists, everyone was extremely approachable, ready to help you with contacts, professional networking and future collaborations. It was easy to be introduced to experts by our mentors and peers, and even to introduce ourselves and ask for brief meetings. All were

unrestrained in giving feedback and professional advice. This easy and welcoming communication was novel to us.

The meeting lasted for five days, and we DCERF grant recipients were invited to several social events, including the ARVO Sunday Social, the Students/Trainee Reception, the Women in Eye and Vision Research Luncheon and the President Reception in addition to being free to attend all the scientific sessions, poster presentations, expos, workshops, seminars, keynote and award lectures we could fit into our schedules. The best thing about receiving a DCERF award is that all expenses are covered by the ARVO Foundation. For developing country scientists this is of enormous importance because it provides a high impact platform to help us establish ourselves as a vision and eye researchers.



WEAVR Luncheon

After five productive, enriching days, I came back home empowered to proceed with my research and initiate new ones with the help and support of several mentors that were provided to each of the DCERF awardees. This memorable and empowering experience was established and provided by ARVO Foundation and its Developing Countries Eye Research Travel Fellowship grant. Application and submissions are open each year to developing country researchers who have not previously attended an ARVO Annual Meeting. Based on one's previous professional achievements, motivations, professional goals and career plans trainees, ophthalmologists, eye and vision researchers from developing countries can compete for this prestigious award.

I conclude my personal story by inviting every eye and vision scientist, ophthalmologist, resident and fellow to explore the multitude of opportunities that ARVO offers and become ARVO members

(even if just online subscribers), in order to strengthen our South-European ARVO Chapter and thus build a stronger community, united for excellence in eye and vision science. More importantly, I encourage each young ophthalmologist and eye scientist from our region who has not had the great experience of attending an ARVO Annual Meeting to apply for the Developing Countries Eye Research Travel Fellowship grant and dive into the new, exciting world driven by scientific innovation, data, evidence and scientific truth.



Nina Jovanovic with mentor  
Pinakin Gunvant Davey, OD, PhD



Nina Jovanovic with mentor  
Luminita I. Paraoan, PhD