

# Dancing, Dallas and dissemination: Representing the BEAM lab in North America

Jude Bek, Research Associate

As part of an Investing in Success award from the University of Manchester, I recently had the opportunity to travel to the USA and Canada to present some of my work, meet with academics and practitioners, and learn more about dance and its benefits for people with Parkinson's.

## Mark Morris Dance Group



The first stop on my tour was Brooklyn, New York. Here I took part in an educational workshop at the Mark Morris Dance Center, the home of Dance for PD - an approach specifically designed for people with Parkinson's that is now delivered in several countries around the world. A two-day course provided valuable insights into how dance can be beneficial for people with Parkinson's on many levels including physically, cognitively, emotionally and socially. It was a privilege to participate in two 'real' dance classes and talk with participants (some of whom have been attending for several years) about their experiences. As one of the few non-dancers attending this mostly practical-based course I was definitely out of my comfort zone, but learned a great deal, and took away some ideas that will help shape my research into dance and Parkinson's.

## American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine

This international conference was held at the vast Hilton Anatole in Dallas – in true Texas style, one of the biggest hotels I've ever seen, with an incredible collection of artworks from around the world (including a section of the Berlin wall) and even a sculpture garden.



The array of rehabilitation-focused research on show was almost as impressive. As well as presenting posters on two recent Parkinson's projects from our lab (observation of dance; home training of everyday actions with observation and imagery), I attended some thought-provoking talks on topics

including exercise in older people and Parkinson's, neurologic music therapy and patient/public involvement. I also got to chat to the president of ACRM about my research!



## University of Western Ontario



Across the border in Canada, my next destination was the city named after our own capital, where I visited the Music and Neuroscience Lab at the University of Western Ontario. I gave a talk to the Brain and Mind

Institute about my research into dance and action representation in Parkinson's, which was followed by some interesting discussions with lab members working on various aspects of musical and rhythmic processing and rehabilitation.

## Canada's National Ballet School

From London I travelled east to Toronto, my final stop, where I joined a Parkinson's dance class at Canada's National Ballet School. The NBS are actively involved in research and I met with Rachel Bar, a former ballet dancer who is now investigating dance and Parkinson's. She and her collaborators at York University (Toronto) have conducted some exciting preliminary research on neural effects of dance in people with Parkinson's, and I look forward to hearing about further developments.



## Thanks...

I would like to thank the University (and Ellen Poliakoff) for providing this unique opportunity for me to broaden my horizons, share my research with different groups, and gather inspiration for future projects. I would encourage others to do the same if possible - there is so much to learn by connecting with people and places outside of your day to day research world!