



FRANCESCA MURATORE

Role: Paediatric Orthotist

Institution: NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

RESEARCH STORY

I realised that I wanted to be a researcher during my second year of undergraduate at the University of Genoa when I met some researchers from other countries who were doing their PhDs. However, in Italy at that time the opportunities for Orthotists/Prosthetists to do a PhD or take part in a research project were close to zero. In 2013 when I moved to Scotland, that desire was still in me, lingering and hiding inside, but I had a long way to go before reconnecting with it.

Eventually, I started to work in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and one of my colleagues was doing an MRes in Health Research. Exactly in that moment, like a thunderbolt the desire came out again and a fire started to burn inside of my heart. I lost no time at all, and I applied for the Masters at the University of Stirling. It seemed a dream, but I immediately received a conditional offer requiring a mark of 6.5 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Maybe, it does not seem difficult as first, but the IELTS score goes from 0 to 9, so a score of 6.5 is the equivalent of 72.2%. From that point started months of studying and practicing English. I am not embarrassed to say that I failed twice, getting 6.0 each time, but failure is the road to success. At the third attempt I got my mark 6.5 and I started the MRes in Health Research while working full-time and studying part-time. I was studying in the evenings and during weekends, falling asleep surrounded by notes and the laptop on my bedside table. I remember taking days off from work only for studying, starting at 8am and finishing at 10pm. I completed my MRes, overcoming all the obstacles that I found all over my

path, including the last big hurdle, COVID-19, which hit while I was writing my dissertation.

Just before I graduated with my MRes in June 2020, I said to my supervisors that I was interested in a career in research, and to my complete surprise the Programme Director offered me the chance to start a PhD in Health Sciences at the University of Stirling and guided me through the funding process.

At that point I decided to reduce my working pattern to 34 hours a week and studying part-time. It has not been easy; a PhD is a massive project and it's like a never-ending story. It likely seems longer to me because 1/3 way through the PhD, a new person arrived in my life, and I had to take a break to have and look after my PhD baby, Leonardo. I am just about to re-start it in September 2024. I am enjoying this journey, and even if it has been really hard it will be worthwhile once completed.

RESEARCH TIPS

- Please don't give up, sometimes it seems too difficult and if you feel you cannot do by yourself: ask for help and you will be helped. Speak up with Lectures and to other professionals about your desire and they will guide you in the right way. It is important having a mentor but if you lose him/her, don't panic you can always find another one.
- There is plenty of funding for research, but the applications can be tedious and long.
- If you fail, try again and again; being relentless is the right state of mind to achieve your goal. Take many deep breaths because the road to success is paved with failures.

