The ISPOR Travel Scholarship Award Experience – ISPOR 16th Annual European Congress
Samah R Ibrahim, MPA, Ministry of Health, Cairo, Egypt

Living in Egypt at this historical moment—in which we are going through the most important transition in our history—and as I took greater responsibility in the Egyptian pharmaceutical public sector through my current post, I believe that my attendance in the ISPOR 16th Annual European Congress in Dublin, Ireland was a great opportunity to expand my knowledge base in pharmacoeconomics and outcome research, exchange experience in the field with experts and academics from more than 70 countries, and to have an overview on best practices and countries experiences in the introduction and implementation of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) as an important tool to guide and direct health policy and improve the efficiency of health systems.

That is why I want to express my gratitude for and ISPOR Meeting Travel Scholarship Award, which gave me this opportunity to attend the Congress. It was the first time for me to attend an ISPOR meeting and was a great chance for networking and meeting experts in all disciplines relevant to pharmacoeconomics.

I attended very informative short courses that improved my knowledge base in HTA, statistical analysis in pharmacoeconomic studies, value based pricing and risk sharing. This indeed improved my performance as a member of the steering committee of the pharmacoeconomic unit. The plenary sessions introduced recent policy debates about the active role of patients in HTA practice, the new trend of multicriteria decision making, and societal and ethical considerations instead of the use cost-effectiveness alone. Finally, the congress brought together regulators, HTA bodies, payers, and industry and patient groups in a very fruitful dialogue to align all efforts towards better health care.

The health sector in Egypt suffers from limited resources; high percentage of out-of pocket health expenditure with more than 30% of the health expenditure goes for drugs. That is why we have started some initiatives for reform in the pharmaceutical sector. As a project manager for the new Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Reform project and a member in the steering committee of the pharmacoeconomic unit, I am willing to apply the knowledge and skills gained from this meeting to improve efficiency of medicines selections and procurement processes, to set an up to date national clinical guide lines and to guide pricing and tendering decisions in order to enhance rational use and strengthen medicines management systems.

I always repeat Hellen Keller's words, "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence," and the experience of attending the ISPOR 16th Annual European Congress gave me more hope and confidence that we can lead change in the paradigm toward health care in the Arab World by the introduction and use of HTA tool to guide policy decisions for more efficient health systems.