



## CONFERENCE REPORT

The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Young Researchers Conference on Deafblindness  
Saint Petersburg, Russia. November 23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

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The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Young Researchers Conference on Deafblindness took place in Saint Petersburg, Russia from November 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The conference was hosted by the Russian Deafblind Academy "Con-nection" and had the support of Deafblind International. The first two days had young adults with deafblindness participate in workshops, excursions, and team-building exercises. On the third day, they were joined by the other attendees to participate in drama and theatre workshops led by people involved with a Russian inclusive theatre. We saw some of the approaches later that evening, during a performance of "The Nights of Kholstomer" which featured deafblind and hearing actors. These workshops were an engaging opportunity to connect with other participants before having a facilitated discussion by Dr. Jerry Petroff on developing a global community of people interested in deafblind research. This included initial brainstorming groups to develop ideas around topics and questions that would be of interest to study.

Over the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, 38 abstracts were selected for presentations from young researchers, students, practitioners, and family members to share their experiences in the field and present their work and research from around the world. These were interspersed between presentations from leading experts in the field, which collectively felt like an international masterclass. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Isabel Amaral started off the day by exploring research and highlighting curiosity as a critical role in developing good questions. Susan Bruce, Ph.D., and Dr. Saskia Damen jointly shared about writing a good research proposal, outlining the basic components as well as ethical considerations. Dr. Jerry Petroff shared about transitioning from school to adult life with examples of experiences from individuals with deafblindness; he demonstrated how quality of life can and should be defined by each individual. Susan Bruce, Ph.D., shared about evidence-based practices, and how there is more research and evidence in deafblindness than might be expected. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Saskia Damen shared about

the challenges of identification within the field of deafblindness, not only for criteria in providing services, but also issues with common terminology in literature. Dr. Jude Nicholas explored cognitive assessments and how a combination of methods may provide an appropriate approach for assessing of individuals with deafblindness. Finally, Darija Udovicic Mahmuljin shared about the transdisciplinary approach in research and practice as a valuable model to engage with complex problems. In a field that is easily misunderstood, the importance of knowing current research and approaches to developing questions cannot be understated. Guiding future leaders and professionals to provide evidence-based services is valuable, but even more crucial is ensuring that the voices of deafblind individuals, as well as families, always remain central.

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