

Priscilla M. Clarkson 2019 Undergraduate Travel Award

Michaella Alexandrou, a medical student at the University of Athens, was awarded the Priscilla M. Clarkson Undergraduate Travel Award to attend the 2019 American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida. Alexandrou shared more about her ACSM Annual Meeting presentation, her mentors, and what it means to be an ACSM member.

The Clarkson Travel Award was created by former colleagues and students of Priscilla M. Clarkson, Ph.D., FACSM, to honor and continue her legacy. Dr Clarkson's extensive academic career and service within ACSM shined most brightly through her passion for mentoring. This includes her leadership as editor-in-chief of the Exercise and Sport Sciences Reviews (ESSR) as she implemented features that would be helpful for student readers of ESSR. Who is the mentor who has most influenced you?

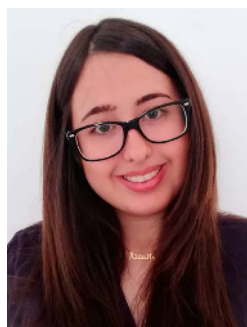
The two people I consider as my mentors and I am grateful for their support are Anastassios Philippou, assistant professor of Experimental Physiology, and Costas Chryssanthopoulos, scientific associate of the Laboratory of Experimental Physiology of the Medical School of Athens. Each display a passion and dedication for the field of sports medicine that is very inspiring! They are both excellent professors, with great ambition for the field, but at the same time very down to earth and welcoming, treating every student as a colleague. It is worth mentioning that the laboratory has started offering labs regarding physiology of exercise to medical students within the physiology course in hopes of introducing them to the field and inspiring them to pursue it further.

What sparked your interest in the field and in ACSM?

I was first introduced to the field of sports medicine last year when I was selected to participate in the round table of sports physiology at a student conference coordinated by the professors I mentioned. With their help and support, I had the opportunity to understand the connection between medicine and exercise in a whole new level. The fact that exercise can revolutionize our quality of life and health made me decide to get involved and participate in more research projects and in ACSM. In addition to that, my fellow classmates and I have decided to create a running club in our medical school, called "Med Runners," encouraging all fellow classmates to understand the importance of exercise by "running" their way to a healthier life.

Can you describe the research you presented at the upcoming ACSM's 66th Annual Meeting in Orlando?

The purpose of our research is to examine the metabolic responses of preexercise carbohydrate ingestion in cycling and running on the same individuals. Several studies have examined the



Michaella Alexandrou
2019 recipient of the Priscilla M. Clarkson Undergraduate Travel Award

metabolic responses of preexercise carbohydrate ingestion in cycling and running. However, to the best of our knowledge, none of the existing studies have compared directly cycling and running on the same individuals. Since cycling and running are two of the most common types of exercise, we have chosen to compare glucose metabolism during these two types, which can be applied and explain similar responses to clinical populations, such as diabetics.

What's your advice to students who are just starting out in the field?

What I suggest to my fellow students is not to hesitate to reach out to the academic community and approach their professors, expressing their interest, in order to be given opportunities for further engagement. This piece of advice seems simple, but from my experience, the first step is usually the most difficult one.

What's one thing that other people may not know about you (other passions, hobbies, etc.)?

An unknown characteristic of mine, which many people may not expect, is my passion for politics. Like medicine, politics play a major role in influencing people's quality of life, and what fascinates me a lot in this field is the ability to contribute in a determinant way to the evolution of our society. That's why I decided to pursue a minor in International Relations at the American College of Greece in parallel with my medical studies, and in my spare time, I participate in working groups, NGOs, and youth actions. In the era of specialization, I still believe in the value of *homo universalis*.

Where do you see yourself in 5 yrs?

That is a very difficult question to answer. I am a firm believer that life is unpredictable and that we always have to be open to new and different opportunities and experiences that come along the way and be willing for them to change and

shape us, so the hopes and dreams I have today will probably not be the same one year on from now. The only thing that is hopefully certain is that in three years, I will have graduated from medical school and would have started my residency or a postgraduate program like a master's degree. I try to take everything one step at a time, and what I dream of is nothing more than a lifestyle that allows me to be fulfilled.

What does it mean to you to be an ACSM member?

I am a very new ACSM member, so I have not yet discovered all the opportunities that this entails, especially from an educational point of view. However, I feel that being an ACSM member makes me part of a family of people whose primary goal is to promote activities, opportunities, and research projects in the field of sports medicine for the benefit of the society at international level.

About the Travel Award

The ACSM Foundation offers one \$1000 travel award through the Priscilla Clarkson Memorial Fund. The purpose

of the award is to provide assistance to help fund travel expenses accrued by one undergraduate student to present his or her scholarly work at the ACSM Annual Meeting.

Dr Clarkson was a long-time ACSM member, serving at regional and national levels, including an appointment as the president of the New England Chapter and as the 44th president of ACSM (2000–2001). The College honored her with the Citation Award in 1997 and the Honor Award in 2005. Dr Clarkson served as the editor-in-chief of *ESSR* from 2006 to 2012. Her extensive academic career and service to the College shined most brightly through her passion for mentoring.

Readers interested in contributing to the Priscilla Clarkson Memorial Fund, or any of the other ACSM research grants or travel awards, through a designated gift should contact the ACSM Foundation (go to <https://www.acsm.org/acsm-membership/support-acsm-foundation/grants-and-financial-support> or call 317-637-9200). Students interested in applying should check back at the site for the application and submission dates.