

**Amanda Roberts, UK**

### **My experience at the ERS Congress, 3 September 2016**

The ERS International Congress happens once a year and visits a different European City each time. It is massive with over 20,000 delegates - and it is fascinating to attend. So many research movers and shakers in the world of respiratory conditions.

I jumped at the chance to help with a workshop session about EPAP at the ELF patient organisation networking day on 3 September, just so that I could attend this year's Congress in London. And what a day it was. Navigating the underground and DLR was simple – with helpers on the platform at Canning Town, where it was evident I was not the only one heading excitedly to the Excel Arena by changing DLR trains at this busy junction.

I had been sent a barcoded badge permit beforehand and was faced with automatic badge dispensing machines at the check-in. IT never seems to work for me and so my heart sank. But to my surprise – the scan worked first time and I was quickly the proud possessor of a badge and lanyard.

The exhibitions were not open on the Saturday, which was a massive disappointment. I know there are regulations about pharmaceutical companies coming into contact with real patients at exhibitions, but I relish seeing what is happening in the industry.

Amazingly for such a big place and so many delegates, my path crossed with several people, who I have met before through being on patient input platforms for various clinical trials. Good to have a chance to touch base with them. And, goodness me, when I walked into the room where the day was being held, it was like a homecoming. So many friends, that I had made over the years as an asthma patient representative. The world we move in is quite a small one really and it is a wonderful opportunity to network and meet up face to face.

The presentations were really worth hearing. Singing for lung health got us all moving. The key note speaker, Rosamund Snow, who is patient editor of the British Medical Journal, was inspirational. We were updated on various other things that are happening and then we split into workshops. We were doing a three-hander about the value of the EPAP course and I was specifically talking about the skills patients and carers bring to any health-related project.

Frustratingly I then had to set off on the three hour journey home rather than attend the always fabulous opening ceremony.