

# December 2021 Newsletter



## Welcome to the Team, Kyle!

We are thrilled to introduce you to Kyle Shrivastava, the newest member of the ACP team! Kyle joined ACP in November as the Program Manager of the iConquerMS Research Inclusion Diversity and Equity (RIDE) Council, which is working to bridge the gap between awareness and full representation of racial, ethnic, and gender minority groups in research. Kyle brings with him a background in project management, stakeholder management, program design and facilitation, having most recently managed and supported international peace building projects for **PartnersGlobal**, a DC-based international non-profit. His experience and perspective will be valuable assets to the RIDE Council as they bring together diverse stakeholders within the MS community to discuss and strategize on how to best build genuine partnerships that encourage minority participation both within the iConquerMS network and beyond.



Kyle is originally from Pennsylvania and, for the past 3 years, lived in Washington, DC. He and his fiancé recently purchased a house in Fort Collins, Colorado, and are in the process of settling in there. Kyle did his undergraduate studies at Bucknell University, earning a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. He went on to graduate school

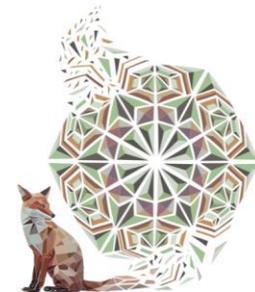
at Columbia University and earned a Master of Science in Negotiation and Conflict Resolution. He has six years of experience managing international projects with a focus on participatory processes and cross-cultural facilitation. Most of his career has been focused on working with underserved communities.



Kyle spent three and a half years in West Africa early in his professional career. After graduating from Bucknell he worked in Senegal for two years as a community economic development agent with the Peace Corps. During that time, he helped women's groups form small businesses. For example, one of his main projects consisted of building a business around transforming

and exporting rice, while another focused on helping entrepreneurs to powder and sell the leaves of the [moringa tree](#) as a nutritional supplement. After graduate school, Kyle went to Liberia to work with [Bosh Bosh](#) as a business development consultant through [Peace Corps Response](#). Bosh Bosh is a women's empowerment nonprofit that makes handbags and other textiles which they sell to fund a local girls' education program. After returning to the US, Kyle spent three years at [PartnersGlobal](#), managing peace building projects that spanned from West Africa, to Eastern Europe, and South East Asia. Kyle shares that the one of the most meaningful aspects of his time abroad was being part of the community in Senegal as a Peace Corps volunteer. In his words, "I lived with a local family in a household of ten or so. Coming from an individualist society, it was really eye opening to see how everyone worked together on a daily basis to contribute to the family's wellbeing. A lot of time was spent outside, sitting on mats in our open courtyard simply being with one another. It made me question the speed and purpose of my life in the US and has led me to ensure that family is always a central priority as I move forward."

When not at work, Kyle is a singer/songwriter and plays the acoustic guitar. He also enjoys drawing mandalas and other forms of geometric art. According to Kyle, "I usually only use black ink on paper but sometimes will dabble in digital art or watercolor. It's a way to unwind in my free time." Kyle is also a yoga instructor and co-founder of [Yoga Humans](#), a resource site



for new and aspiring yoga teachers. He recently published his first book, [Feral: Returning to the Wild](#).

Kyle and his fiancé recently returned from a 6-month coast-to-coast camping trip that took a circuitous route across the United States, starting in Colorado and ending in Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. He shares, “We saved for two or three years and ended up converting my fiancé’s family minivan. We gutted it, put some cabinets and a bed in... We were living in a one-bedroom apartment in DC, it was crowded and we couldn’t leave the apartment without a mask. We were ready to get out of the city. We both quit our jobs and used the money we had saved to float us by. It ended up being a reaffirmation of the fact that when you see an opportunity you should take it. Thankfully, we came back and within a month or so, were both reemployed and in the process of getting resettled. It was a wonderful way to spend the pandemic, but I’m also at a point where I’m pretty happy to get back to work.”



Kyle was drawn to the position at ACP because it’s right up his alley. In his words, “Everything from my degree in conflict resolution to my work in facilitation and participatory processes has been approached through the lens of how do we create the most genuine and effective co-creation experience with local communities,

politicians, advocacy organizations and nonprofits. When I saw this posting, I recognized that this was the same approach ACP was aiming to take. This question of how to help move the medical field towards research that’s designed, implemented, and co-led with constituent communities including those that represent racial minorities is incredibly exciting and absolutely necessary.”

When asked about his vision for the RIDE council, Kyle states, “What we often see in research is really great data that doesn’t always translate to action. As I see it, the RIDE Council will be harnessing community knowledge so as to build off the existing research that ACP has conducted on the complex dynamics between minorities and researchers, the ways they are engaging, and the communication gaps between them. We’ll then work to translate our understanding into actionable impacts and outcomes. On the simplest level, we hope to see our impact in terms of a level of minority participation in the iConquerMS network that’s proportional to the US population. In broader sense, we also hope to build some replicable models that demonstrate how minorities can be equitably and fairly

represented not only in MS research, but in all medical research... To me it's stunning to think that for so many years, the medical field saw MS as a Caucasian disease while data now suggests that incidence rates may be higher in Black communities and more severe in Latinx groups. It seems like the time is ripe, if not long overdue, for us to gain an inclusive and accurate understanding of our country's medical needs. Furthermore, we need to go beyond only thinking about how to reach these populations, and instead also reflect on how we can build genuine and mutually beneficial partnerships that are equitable and inclusive from design to dissemination. We need to think about what an authentic partnership looks like. What an authentic relationship with a community looks like. We need to learn how and when to relegate leadership. Truthfully, I don't think many people know, regardless of their roles within the medical or patient communities. Hopefully, together we'll figure it out."

We are excited to have Kyle on board, lending his experience and insight to the RIDE Council. Their work to diversify MS research will bring us one step closer to ensuring that its findings apply to and benefit people of all racial backgrounds, allowing all individuals living with MS to receive the best care possible. The prospects for 2022 are looking bright! Stay tuned!

