



Fulbright Senior Specialist Program 2023

Motor Speech Disorders: Advancing Clinical Excellence (MSD-ACE)

The Medical University of Plovdiv (MUP) has developed the first master's degree program in Medical Speech and Language Pathology (MSLP) in Bulgaria to address the *urgent need to provide effective treatment to individuals with complex communication and swallowing disorders*. This project will specifically address the conceptual and methodological issues associated with evidence-based practice (EBP) in Bulgaria related to advancing clinical excellence in the assessment and treatment of motor speech disorders (MSD). The current project utilizes the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) framework to develop practice-standards to assess and treat individuals with MSDs via MSLP intervention. Bulgaria currently has no official document defining the scope of practice for speech-language pathologists, including those within medical rehabilitative settings. **The main purpose of this project is to assist in the training of Bulgaria's first-generation of medical speech-language pathologists, which will challenge current practices and beliefs within the Bulgarian healthcare system.** Through highly-specialized training, students will learn to identify and manage complex communication disorders (e.g., MSDs, aphasia, and dysphagia) in medical rehabilitative settings with the ultimate goal of increasing quality of life in those afflicted by the disorder(s). Moreover, there is a critical need to establish clear requirements for the sustainable application of services based on evidence for an ever-expanding scope of clinical practice.

Gregory J. Spray is an Assistant Professor at Auburn University (Alabama, USA) in the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences where he is the Director of the Speech, Neurophysiology, and Attitude Perceptions Laboratory (SNAP Lab). Dr. Spray was previously an Assistant Professor at Michigan State University in the Department of Communicative Sciences and Disorders, where he also served as the Interim Program Director

for the Master of Arts in Speech-Language Pathology Program. He received his Doctor of Philosophy from Michigan State University in August 2020 (dissertation title: Neural Correlates of Phonological Abilities in Children Who Stutter) and completed an additional year of research training as a postdoctoral research associate in the Spartan Stuttering Laboratory where he currently collaborates on an NIH-funded research grant examining the variability of stuttering (R01DC018795, PI: Yaruss). In addition, he has published eight peer-reviewed research articles in the areas of language, stuttering, and dyslexia.

Spray is an ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist and has worked in a number of clinical settings to assess and treat individuals across the lifespan (ages 2-103 years). His therapeutic expertise lies in the areas of dysphagia, motor speech disorders, and cognition. Professionally, Dr. Spray has been an active member of the Michigan Speech-Language-Hearing Association where he served as Treasurer and two terms as President. He currently serves as Secretary of the Council of State Speech-Language-Hearing Association Presidents. In addition, he serves on the ASHA Convention Program Committee of Fluency and serves as a reviewer for the following journals: *Journal of Communication Disorders*, *Topics in Language Disorders*, and *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*.

Dr. Spray was the first American PhD student to participate in the European Union Erasmus+ Exchange Programme at South West University, Bulgaria (project Erasmus+ KA 107 2017-1-BG01-KA107-035621) where he also participated in faculty exchange (2019) and taught a seminar focused on stuttering. He has presented to national and international congresses, conferences, and workshops, including in Bulgaria. Spray was awarded with the Excellence-in-Teaching Citation (2019) from the Provost of Michigan State University for the skill within the classroom. He has taught courses in speech-language pathology at the undergraduate (UG) and graduate (GR) level at Michigan State University and Auburn University, including: Anatomy and Physiology of the Speech & Hearing Mechanisms (UG), Observation and Analysis of Clinical Practice (UG), Evaluation Procedures in Speech-Language Pathology (UG), Intervention Procedures in Speech-Language Pathology (UG), Stuttering Across the Lifespan (UG), Neural Bases of Communication (UG), Neuroanatomy & Physiology of Speech/Language & Hearing (GR), Language Assessment and Intervention: Early Stages (GR), Articulation & Phonological Disorders (GR), Motor Speech Disorders (GR), Clinical Pro-Seminar (GR), and Clinical Practicum in Speech-Language Pathology.

Dr. Spray possesses the professionalism, temperament, and adaptability to successfully complete a FSS project and serve as an ambassador for the United States. He has a clear set of goals for his programmatic research and a wealth of experience in the research laboratory, profession, clinic, and classroom, which will allow him to engage with students, clinicians, and researchers in the area of medical speech-language pathology.