

TRAINING BURSARY PROGRAMME REPORT (2021)

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Training bursary programme destination: Amsterdam Rheumatology and Immunology Center

1) What was the motivation to apply for training in this Centre?

In the past years, I decided to scientifically focus on SLE and more precisely on treat-to-target and remission in SLE. My aim was to apply at a Lupus center where I could broaden my knowledge about both the disease and my research topic. Since the Amsterdam Rheumatology and Immunology Center (ARC) is a world-renowned center for remission and treat-to-target, the choice fell quickly. I applied with a vague research proposal since I was unsure, what kind of research project could be realized at the center in 8 weeks of time. After receiving the notification of my acceptance, I developed a more concrete research proposal with my supervisor at ARC, Dr. Irene Bultink. Due to the rather limited period of time and the COVID-19-pandemic, we decided for a small project that did not include the active recruitment of patients. The aim was to perform an online survey among SLE-patients that assesses the attitude of patients towards treat-to-target and perceived hurdles for the implementation into clinical care.

In addition to perform clinical research, It was my desire to get to know another Lupus Center with its workflows, its way of managing lupus patients, its structure, the documentation system and its ways of teaching and education.

2) How the objectives were fulfilled by the training?

To summarize, my expectations and objectives were completely fulfilled. The entire team warmly welcomed and integrated me from day one. I was able to advance my project to the point of positive ethical votes and the distribution of the survey among international patient organizations. Furthermore, I was invited to attend clinics, perform ultrasounds and participate in grand rounds, lunch meetings and interdisciplinary meetings. Furthermore, I received the opportunity to join lupus research meetings and to present my ideas and discuss them with the group. I was closely supervised by Dr. Bultink and her colleagues and could contact them with any questions..

3) What are the main opportunities / strengths this centre offers for future applicants?

ARC is one of the most important rheumatological centers in the Netherlands and Europe with a large lupus cohort and high clinical and scientific expertise. It is not only clinical but also basic and translational research that can be performed at ARC and any research idea and proposal is welcomed and discussed for its relevance and feasibility. Among others, the research focuses on treat-to-target, pregnancy in SLE and outcome parameters.

Furthermore, from a clinical point of view, applicants can benefit from the vast learning opportunities the staff offers. Not to be forgotten is the excellent organization in advance with even the arrangement of housing.

4) Practical advice for future applicants to the SLEuro training bursary

The SLEuro training bursary programme is an excellent opportunity to experience a world-renowned lupus center. I highly recommend taking the chance to advance the scientific and clinical expertise, build up collaborations, and of course, immerse oneself in another culture and surrounding.

To join the clinics, some basic knowledge in Dutch is recommended, however, many patients feel comfortable with speaking English or even German. I recommend contacting the center in advance to communicate objectives of the training and to define personal goals. Due to the limited amount of time, I advise future applicants to either have a well prepared proposal, including an ethics vote before the start of the programme or to agree with the supervisor on a smaller project that might not require an ethics vote (as ethics votes are most time consuming). I am grateful for the opportunity given by SLEuro that allowed me to develop new perspectives on lupus care and research and improve my clinical knowledge and skills.