

## **TRAINING BURSARY PROGRAMME REPORT (2021)**

SLEuro c/o AIM Italy srl  
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Training bursary program destination: Servicio de Enfermedades Autoinmunes, Hospital Clinic de Barcelona, España.

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

Latin America has experienced an increasing trend in mortality from systemic lupus erythematosus as an expression of social inequalities in health. These inequalities are also expressed in a gap in the training of professionals specialised in the management of this disease, which has a direct impact on the quality of healthcare provided to this group of patients.

After completing my specialisation in Internal Medicine, I felt that I needed to improve my clinical and research skills in relation to SLE. In this sense, the Autoimmune Diseases Service of the Hospital Clinic of Barcelona seemed to me the perfect setting to give a boost to my professional career and to acquire advanced clinical and research skills from world experts in SLE.

I found this reference centre attractive because of its leading experts in topics such as SLE and pregnancy, antiphospholipid syndrome and systemic vasculitis. I felt that this centre would undoubtedly enrich my academic collaboration network and provide an extraordinary experience.

### **2) How the objectives were fulfilled by the training?**

The training was carried out under the supervision of Professor Dr. Ricard Cervera, who provided me with a warm welcome and quickly integrated me into the activities of the service. During my stay I was able to actively participate in outpatient consultations, visiting patients in conventional and intensive care wards, interconsultations to other services (including emergency), and in the care of patients in the day hospital.

On a weekly basis, I participated in the interstitial lung disease committee, the immunology service seminar, the autoimmune diseases-nephrology forum and the Grand Round of

autoimmune diseases. In these venues, clinical cases were discussed and novel topics related to systemic autoimmune diseases were debated among residents, fellows, specialists and consultants from various services.

I had the opportunity to be involved in a research project to determine the factors associated with early retinal toxicity in patients with SLE treated with hydroxychloroquine in the Hospital Clinic cohort. While this project is still ongoing, it opens the door for continued research collaboration between the two institutions.

Dr. Cervera always encouraged and facilitated my participation in academic events related to SLE such as: 14th International Congress of SLE, Autoimmunity Oration, Autoimmune Diseases UP TO DATE, Reunió multidisciplinar en malalties autoimmunes-Fòrum Català de Malalties Autoimmunes (FOCMA) and 1st Meeting of the Spanish Society of Systemic Autoimmune Diseases.

This set of care, teaching and research activities allowed me to consolidate my knowledge in SLE and to get in touch with another care model based on current standards for care and research in this group of patients.

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

The Autoimmune Diseases Service at Hospital Clinic de Barcelona offers a unique opportunity for those interested in SLE. Annually, it sees more than 600 patients with SLE and more than 80 pregnancies in patients with autoimmune diseases. This volume of care allows for the successful development of teaching and research in its multiple clinical scenarios, ideal for those professionals who do not have specialised services for these diseases in their institutions or whose low frequency of these diseases has prevented them from having experience in their management.

The Hospital Clinic is equipped with state-of-the-art technology and its professionals are highly qualified, many of them leaders in their areas of expertise. The institution also implements cutting-edge clinical trials that give the hospital a leading position in biomedical research.

Dr. Cervera and his group are linked to the August Pi Sunyer Biomedical Research Institute (IDIBAPS), with which they develop the research line on Biological Aggression and Response Mechanisms and promote basic, clinical and translational research on these diseases in a multidisciplinary way, with the participation of members of the Autoimmune Diseases Service,

Internal Medicine, Ophthalmology, Nephrology, Immunology, Haemostasis, Hepatology, Obstetrics and Dermatology, among others.

I consider that another added value of this institution is the exchange with many professionals who carry out their rotations and fellowships, not only from Spain, but also from other parts of Europe and Latin America, with whom the exchange is always enriching.

#### **4) future applicants to the SLEuro training bursary**

The SLEuro training bursary is a great opportunity for those who wish to boost their career in SLE care and/or research.

I recommend that you apply to do your training at the Department of Autoimmune Diseases of the Hospital Clinic de Barcelona; but please note that you will have to take the Master in Advanced Medical Skills-Autoimmune Diseases at the University of Barcelona to do so, so your stay should be longer.

Patients who come to the Hospital Clinic feel more comfortable speaking Catalan, so it would be advisable to have some knowledge of the language, although a good command of Spanish will help to achieve communicative intent.

Those who venture into this training experience should be prepared to combine high-level healthcare, teaching and research activities, which are often intense and time-consuming, but highly edifying.

Manage your time well so that you can enjoy Barcelona and all its attractions.