

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

SLEuro c/o AIM Italy srl  
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Training bursary program destination: Policlinic of Rheumatology & Hiller Research Unit, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf (UDUS) (Düsseldorf)

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

In the past few years whilst fulfilling my residency, I have been working on my PhD focused on health-related quality of life in lupus patients. “The Poliklinik für Rheumatologie” at the Düsseldorf Universitätsklinikum (UKD) was my first choice since my research interests coincide very much with their activities - the UKD team is advanced in studies, performed based on patient-reported outcomes, namely the LuLa-study - a nationwide SLE cohort study with a focus on disease burden, therapy adherence and coping. SLEuro offered me an opportunity to experience an European lupus centre and develop new perspectives on lupus care and research.

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

The clinic provides care for patients with rheumatologic diseases, offers pregnancy planning consultations, and does new cases diagnostics. As a part of my clinical training, I participated in the specialised consultation outpatient clinic, held every Monday to Friday. I also attended rounds at the medical ward of the Rheumatology Department and participated in the discussions of complex cases. In addition, I attended the department’s many scientific meetings, which included bi-monthly discussion of scientific initiatives, discussions of challenging clinical cases and meetings with the hospital’s radiologists. These activities gave me a different perspective on how a rheumatology department in one of the SLEuro centres is organised; at the same time, I learned what is the best practice for assessing rheumatology patients. Furthermore, I was able to take part in a RheumaAkademie lupus course and received theoretical and practical knowledge on capillary microscopy, which contributed significantly to my education as a resident. The project I carried out involved participation in an international study aimed at patients’ perspective on treat-to-target therapy in SLE. The original text of the survey was translated in Bulgarian and back-translated in German. Then, the validated Bulgarian text was circulated to lupus patients through an online platform in collaboration with patients organisations. So far, more than 200 Bulgarian lupus patients have participated in the study.

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

UKD has a large cohort of in- and outpatients with various rheumatic diseases and established advanced management of patients with SLE. The team at the clinic are welcoming and keep you involved in different activities. All these reasons make the UKD a perfect place for research projects and an inspiration for best-practice that can be implemented in home countries.

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

I highly recommend the SLEuro programme to young rheumatologists. Motivation, clear objectives and the great academic location would definitely help each participant. I recommend getting in touch with the contact person at the centre to discuss the available research opportunities in order to prepare a schedule ahead of the visit. Overall, I am grateful to have had the chance to learn invaluable practical lessons that have greatly bolstered my work experience.