

TRAINING BURSARY PROGRAMME REPORT (2021)

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Training bursary program destination: Centre de Référence de Maladies Rares, Hôpital Cochin, Paris

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

The main reason that led me to apply for a SLEuro training bursary was to expand my knowledge and strengthen my clinical and research skills in the SLE field, by learning from the most dedicated experts, at a highly recognized SLE European centre.

The Hôpital Cochin (Paris) works as a national reference centre for rare autoimmune and systemic diseases, and concentrates a large number of SLE patients, with diverse clinical presentations, and the most challenging management. Their medical team is world-renowned, and Prof. Nathalie Costedoat-Chalumeau has a strong expertise in the SLE area. She leads a national registry of pregnancies in patients with autoimmune diseases, including SLE and APS, and has contributed with significant knowledge in the field.

The SLE training bursary represented a unique opportunity, to be able to closely interact with them, learning in daily clinical scenarios; and to enrich my training in clinical research by participating in the projects developed at this centre. It was my will to capitalize those learnings, in order to apply them afterwards in the Unit that I work in.

2) How the objectives were fulfilled by the training?

My training visit included both clinical practice as well as research activities.

The clinical part of my training visit included the participation in the specialized outpatient clinic for rare diseases, held by Professor Nathalie Costedoat-Chalumeau. Several SLE and APS patients are addressed to her, given her expertise in the field, and I could witness a variety of SLE presentations, with rare manifestations, challenging differential diagnoses, and an experienced management and follow-up of such complex cases. I was particularly impressed by how therapeutic adherence was assessed at each visit, and by the close and effective follow-up of SLE and APS pregnancies.

Moreover, I was involved in all the scientific meetings held at the Internal Medicine Service, which included discussion of complex clinical cases of patients with SLE, as well as other autoimmune systemic conditions. This multidisciplinary and team-working approach gave me a perspective on how this prestigious centre is organized for resolving complex systemic conditions. Additionally, I participated in academic activities for the interns, which included academic classes, as well as bibliographic updates.

During my stay, I was also invited to participate in the 83^o Congrès de la Société Nationale Française de Médecine Interne, which addressed and updated important topics in Internal Medicine, including SLE and APS.

As regards the research activity, I had the opportunity to work in an observational study based on a prospective French registry on pregnant women affected by autoimmune

diseases (the “Groupe de recherche sur la Grossesse et les Maladies Rares -GR2 study-”). My project aimed to assess the relation between HCQ blood concentrations during the first trimester of pregnancy and the maternal and foetal outcomes in patients with SLE. We plan to submit these findings as a manuscript for an international journal publication in the following months.

Beyond clinical practice and research activities, this experience has allowed me to expand my scientific network, enabling future international collaborations.

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

The Centre de Référence de Maladies Rares at the Hôpital Cochin is one of most recognized centres for patients with autoimmune systemic diseases in Europe. I would like to highlight the expertise of Pr. Costedoat-Chalumeau, as a referent in SLE at the Internal Medicine Service, as well as Pr. Luc Mouthon -chief of the Service- and Pr. Benjamin Terrier, who also contributed to my integration to the diverse scientific activities of the team.

From a clinical point of view, this centre offers an advanced management of complex patients with SLE, among other autoimmune systemic conditions, from a global, internal medicine approach, and with the highest academic standards.

This centre is highly engaged in SLE research, and their main focuses are pregnancy in SLE/APS and therapeutic adherence. Moreover, Pr. Costedoat-Chalumeau leads the before-mentioned GR2 Study, which is a huge and valuable database of pregnant patients with autoimmune diseases, that has contributed with significant knowledge in the field, and may continue to derive in numerous sub-projects.

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

In order to know if the centre is suitable for the applicant's expectations, I think it is fundamental to know each centre's profile, their main clinical activities and their research orientation, by contacting them in advance. Due to the limited amount of time, this could help in order to anticipate their schedule, and foresee a research project for their training visit.

Furthermore, I advise future applicants for the Centre de référence de maladies rares at the Hôpital Cochin (Paris) to have an intermediate-advanced level of French, since all the clinical visits and medical scientific reunions are held in that language, and this could allow them to get the most of the training.

In conclusion, this program has not only enriched myself professionally, with a new insight on lupus care and research; but also personally, through the experience of an international exchange.

I am deeply grateful for SLEuro's opportunity, and I encourage future applicants to be part of this invaluable experience.