

Final Report – Training Bursary Programme 2025 Coimbra, Portugal

I am pleased to submit my final report on the training I undertook in Coimbra, Portugal, as part of the Training Bursary Programme 2025. As a junior specialist in rheumatology and a PhD student from Sweden, this programme provided an invaluable educational and professional development opportunity.

I completed a **two-month training period at the CHUC Lupus Clinic**, where I had the privilege of working closely with **Professor Luís Inês**. Under his guidance, I gained valuable insights from his dual expertise as a clinician and academic researcher.

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The primary objective of my training was to deepen my clinical and research understanding of **systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE)** by learning from senior rheumatologists at a specialist SLE centre. This objective was fully met through daily clinical activities and structured learning with Professor Inês and the Lupus Clinic team.

Throughout the programme, I was able to:

- **Observe and participate in clinical management** of complex SLE cases.
- Enhance my **understanding of optimal SLE patient care**, including treatment approaches and evaluation of disease activity.
- Develop my **research skills** through regular discussions of published literature and the latest SLE guidelines.

I also benefited from Professor Inês's extensive research experience. We critically reviewed scientific publications, which sharpened my ability to interpret and apply evidence in both clinical and academic contexts.

During my stay, I completed and submitted an abstract on **SLE disease activity score (SLE-DAS)**, a recently developed measure of disease activity used in parts of Southern Europe. I was fortunate that this abstract was accepted for **oral presentation at SLEuro 2026** – a significant milestone in my early research career.

Clinical and System Insights

The training allowed me to compare healthcare systems and approaches between **Portugal and Sweden**, particularly regarding rheumatology practice. I attended clinics not only for SLE but also for **vasculitis, early rheumatoid arthritis**, and other rheumatic conditions, broadening my clinical exposure.

A major strength of the CHUC Lupus Clinic is the **high patient volume and case complexity**. I frequently saw many SLE patients in a single day – including individuals with severe manifestations requiring advanced treatments such as **anifrolumab** and patients with

significant organ damage, including renal failure. I participated in both **outpatient consultations and day-hospital care**, which greatly enhanced my clinical experience.

Practical Advice for Future Bursary Applicants

Based on my experience, I have several recommendations for future trainees:

- **Prepare ahead of arrival** by communicating with your host supervisor to discuss goals and expectations.
- **Arrange accommodation early.** Booking platforms such as Booking.com are useful.
- Be aware that **bursary disbursement may be delayed**.
- If traveling to Coimbra by air, aim to **arrive in daytime** at Lisbon or Porto airports for better and more affordable shuttle options.
- Install ride-hailing apps such as **Uber and Bolt** for convenient transport, even if staying near the hospital or city centre.
- Clinical activities typically start around **08:45**, and affordable meals are available at the hospital restaurant.
- Bring your **own laptop and clinical coat**.

Coimbra itself is a vibrant city with a rich cultural and academic history. The **University of Coimbra** and its historic library, botanical garden, and cathedral are highlights worth visiting in your spare time. The city's central location also makes day trips to places like Aveiro, Nazaré, Porto, and Lisbon easy and rewarding.

Conclusion

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to participate in this training bursary programme. It has significantly enhanced my clinical competencies, research perspective, and cultural understanding. I hope many future applicants will also benefit from visiting leading SLE centres, learning from international experts, and broadening their professional horizons.

Best Regards,

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