

**1. What was your motivation to apply for the training in this Center? / Main objectives**

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) is one of the most complex and challenging conditions encountered in nephrology. The heterogeneity of its presentation, particularly in renal involvement, requires nuanced clinical reasoning and multidisciplinary management. As a resident in Nephrology with a strong academic and clinical commitment to improving outcomes in immune-mediated kidney diseases, I was particularly motivated to deepen my understanding of lupus nephritis through direct exposure to its clinical, pathological, and therapeutic dimensions.

Applying for the Training Bursary Programme from European Lupus Society (SLEuro) gave me the outstanding opportunity to undertake a clinical internship at Leiden University Medical Center (LUMC), focusing on SLE with renal involvement. I was especially eager to learn from the center's expertise in the diagnostic workup of lupus nephritis, including clinicopathological correlations and their implications for tailored treatment strategies. I chose a high-volume reference center to greatly enhance my clinical skills and academic perspective on glomerular pathologies, mainly lupus nephritis, and to be able to further integrate immunology and nephrology, aspiring to translate this knowledge into my clinical practice.

My primary goals for the internship were to:

- Expand my knowledge of the clinical and histopathological spectrum of lupus nephritis;
- Understand the rationale behind current immunosuppressive regimens and their individualized application;
- Learn about the longitudinal follow-up of patients, including relapse monitoring, therapeutic response, and long-term renal prognosis.

## **2. Were your objectives fulfilled by the training? / Description of activities**

During my training at LUMC, I had the opportunity to participate in both inpatient and outpatient clinical activities focusing on glomerular diseases and systemic autoimmune disorders. The objectives I had set were fully achieved and, in many aspects, surpassed.

I attended daily Nephrology and Transplantation ward rounds, multidisciplinary case discussions, and outpatient clinics dedicated to lupus nephritis and other immune-mediated renal conditions. These experiences allowed me to consolidate theoretical knowledge with real-world decision-making, particularly concerning diagnostic and therapeutic dilemmas in SLE with renal and complex multiorgan involvement.

I was also able to observe how multidisciplinary teams — comprising nephrologists, rheumatologists, pulmonologists, ENT specialists, pathologists, and immunologists — collaborate to optimize individualized treatment strategies. Being actively involved in this shared patient care process represented a key milestone in my clinical training.

Additionally, I took part in several research and clinical seminars that broadened my understanding of immune mechanisms underlying glomerular injury as well as emerging therapeutic targets in lupus nephritis. In this context, I would like to highlight the unique opportunity to attend the first LeiKa Autoimmunity Summer School (Leiden, September 4-6, 2025), a joint initiative between LUMC and the Karolinska Institute (Sweden). This three-day course brought together experts in SLE and ANCA-associated vasculitis, providing a highly enriching environment for clinical and scientific exchange.

## **3. What are the main opportunities/strengths this center offers?**

LUMC offers an exceptional academic and clinical environment for training in lupus nephritis. Its main strengths include:

- Exceptional **comprehensive multidisciplinary care**, integrating nephrology and other relevant medical fields, ensuring a truly holistic approach to patient management;

- **High diagnostic and monitoring precision**, with a strong emphasis on clinicopathological correlations and the critical interpretation of renal biopsies and serological markers – both in the setting of disease flares and treatment response;
- A deep focus on **academic and research culture**, fostering continuous dialogue between clinical practice and translational science;
- A very **supportive and engaged mentorship**, with supervisors deeply involved in teaching, feedback, and stimulating critical thinking;
- Exposure to **clinical trials and innovative therapeutic approaches**, reflecting this center's commitment to advancing care for patients with complex autoimmune diseases.

This combination of clinical depth, scientific rigor, and approachable supervision makes LUMC an ideal institution for trainees seeking to develop advanced skills in autoimmune renal diseases.

#### 4. Practical advice for future applicants of the SLEuro training bursary

For future SLEuro training bursary awardees, I would strongly recommend making the most of the unique learning and networking opportunities available at LUMC. To help, I would like to highlight the following points:

- **Plan and communicate early** – Contact your local supervisor and the host center well in advance to discuss expectations, preferred areas of focus, and practical arrangements. Planning ahead is also advisable when it comes to accommodation, as finding housing in Leiden can be challenging, especially during academic terms.
- **Review current guidelines** – Familiarizing yourself with the most recent KDIGO and EULAR recommendations on lupus nephritis and other immune-mediated kidney diseases will help you follow clinical discussions more confidently.
- **Engage actively** – Don't hesitate to take initiative during ward rounds, outpatient clinics, and academic sessions; ask questions and share your

perspective on cases - the team highly values curiosity and encourages critical thinking and proactive participation.

- **Seize the chance to observe pathology and research activities** – Attending kidney biopsy reviews or research meetings offers invaluable insight into the pathophysiology and ongoing therapeutic innovations in lupus nephritis.
- **Keep an open and reflective mindset** – The clinical diversity at LUMC is remarkable; reflecting on different diagnostic and therapeutic approaches will enrich your understanding and professional growth.

Overall, this internship represents a one-of-a-kind opportunity to integrate cutting-edge science with patient-centered care, while learning from highly committed experts in a truly collaborative academic environment.