

Report of the short-term visit

ERN Exchange Programme 2021-2022

ERN ReCONNET

Name of the participant	Tomás Abrantes da Fonseca
Healthcare provider where the participant is employed	Centro Hospitalar Universitário do Porto
Name of the Healthcare provider and Head of the Unit hosting the exchange visit	Charité Universitäts Medizin Berlin HCP – Prof. Dr. Med. Gerd Burmester
Address	Charitéplatz 1, 10117 Berlin, Germany
Name of the Head of the Unit	Prof. Dr. Med. Gerd Burmester
Start date of the exchange visit	16.01.2023
End date of the exchange visit	27.01.2023

1. Please introduce your position/employment (MD, HAP, patient, other) and years of practice of your profession:

I am a medical doctor of internal medicine in the Immunology Unit of Centro Hospitalar Universitário do Porto. I am a MD since 2013 (10 years), specialist in Internal Medicine since 04.2019 (with outpatient clinic of autoimmune diseases since then) and in full dedication on the Immunology Unit since 09.2022. Local coordinator of IgG4-RD in the ERN ReCONNET.

2. The objectives of the exchange visit were:

Objectives and planned activities:

1. Understanding how the unit works for rare autoimmune diseases, namely IgG4-RD.
2. Share expertise and experience in a highly specialized center.
3. Improve clinical and medical research in rare diseases.
4. Improve the network between our clinical centers.
5. Clinical work - Outpatient clinic visit; Observe multidisciplinary group consultation; discussion of difficult patients and off-label therapies;

3. Please describe the activities performed during your exchange visit:

During the short term visit I performed:



1. Outpatient clinic – observation of multiple patients, not only with my contact MD (Tobias Alexander – IgG4 RD coordinator) but also with different disease cohort coordinators (vasculitis, myositis, SLE).
2. Inpatient care – 2 times a week I stayed in the morning and early afternoon on the inpatient rheumatology unit, observing patients and discussing in the multidisciplinary consultation.
3. Day care hospital – where the clinicians shared with me clinical and organisational knowledge for better application of this system.
4. Outpatient ultrasound clinic – observation of patients with rCTDs and discussion with colleagues better way to start an outpatient clinic in my Unit.
5. Research – visit to the Rheumatology Unit of Basic and Clinical research of Charité.

4. Please describe below what you have learned and which new information/novelities you got during the exchange visit:

1. IgG4-RD related – discussion with Dr. Tobias Alexander how to better approach the disease, its diagnosis, therapies and exclusion of mimickers. Discussion of biomarkers (some with clear benefit to initiate applying in my unit) to diagnosis and follow up (remission, response to therapy); basic and clinical research performed in Charité that will deserve my follow-up and future discussions with Berlin's Charité colleagues;
2. Outpatient related – Improved knowledge in several others diseases, knowledge of innovative serum biomarkers in classic autoimmune diseases (SLE, vasculitis);
3. Inpatient related – better approach to difficult clinical cases.

5. Please describe below how you plan to implement what you have learned in your Healthcare provider/clinic/practice:

1. IgG4-RD – start applying serum biomarkers in day care routine; development of flowcharts to rapid diagnosis and exclusion of mimickers of IgG4-RD. Increase sensitivity of other specialities (Gastroenterology, surgery, etc.) of the necessity of clinical follow-up by an IgG4-RD expertise;
2. Outpatient clinic – creation of vasculitis outpatient clinic with the existing resources of my Unit and Hospital and try to cooperate with Charité in that area;
3. Research - Research related – Improve communication with my Immunology Laboratory (to have access to new biomarkers on IgG4RD) and basic science department of my University (ICBAS) (to development of new projects on IgG4-RDs).

6. Would you visit in the future the same center or another ERN centre for update/new topics?

Definitely I will want to visit the same center in the near future. Now that the networking is established, it would be interesting to do a longer visit (up to 4-6 weeks) with better defined objectives in clinical and basic research in IgG4-RD (probably with collaborative data between the 2 centers).

7. Would you recommend the Exchange Programme to your colleagues? If yes, why?

Yes I do recommend. Clinical immunology is an area with continuous developments and new topics. As senior physicians there are not many opportunities to do short stays programmes in other countries. With ERN exchange programme we have a accessible way to tWe must be able to visit experienced centers in classic diseases (like SLE or vasculitis) or rare diseases (like IgG4-RD) that have more experience and/or better research centers than our own, allowing us to optimize our performance. Furthermore, presencial networking is much better than virtual one, making more



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feasible future cooperation on discussion of difficult patients (namely by CPMS), creation of guidelines and future exchange programmes.