

Report of the short-term visit ERN Exchange Programme 2021-2022 ERN ReCONNET

Name of the participant	Audrey Kay Schembri
Healthcare provider where the participant is employed	Mater Dei Hospital, Malta
Name of the Healthcare provider and Head of the Unit hosting the exchange visit	IRCCS AOU San Martino Largo Rosanna Benzi, 10, 16132, Genova, Italy
Address	
Name of the Head of the Unit	Maurizio Cutolo Head, Rheumatology Unit
Start date of the exchange visit	23 rd January 2023
End date of the exchange visit	27 th January 2023

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

I am an Allied Health Practitioner, a senior physiotherapist within the Maltese Government System in Malta. I have been working as a physiotherapist for just over 8 years now.

2. The objectives of the exchange visit were:

The main objective of this exchange was to improve my knowledge on the management of rare connective tissue diseases and conditions in relation to physiotherapy management. I was particularly interested in observing the treatment of patients with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. Another objective was to identify the need of such a clinic within the department.

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

During my visit, I visited a number of outpatient clinics run by rheumatologists for the management of rheumatology conditions. The conditions observed were patients with osteoarthritis, osteopaenia, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, lupus, systemic sclerosis, Raynaud's disease, Ehlers Danlos syndrome, fibromyalgia and polymyalgia. I also had the opportunity to view procedures performed such as an infiltration of hyaluronic acid for osteoarthritis, capillaroscopies to view the circulation within the nail bed of patients suffering from systemic sclerosis/Raynaud's disease and bone density scanning to determine whether bone health is normal, osteopaenic or osteoporotic.

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



Through this experience I have gained a lot of new information in relation to rheumatoid conditions. This is not my current area of practice (I currently work as a physiotherapist with patients who suffer neurological conditions), however, information learnt was new and enriching. Though the information was not directly related to my current practice, I do believe that it may be transferred to certain patient situations. Having the knowledge about a wider population, will allow me to identify signs and symptoms which previously may not have been identified by me, had I not had this experience. This visit has once more confirmed the importance of holistic care within a multidisciplinary team setting.

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

The visit will be discussed with members of staff, team leaders and management. This will ensure the dissemination of knowledge and transferability of information. Personally, I feel as though I have improved my observation skills and increased my attention to conditions mentioned during the visit in order to holistically treat patients.

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

I would be interested in visiting a different ERN centre, this time more related to my area of current practice.

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

Yes, I believe it is a valuable learning experience no matter the type of information learnt. Knowledge is power and knowing more about any subject is fruitful and may be useful in future practice.