ECCO Travel Award

Enhancing clinical and endoscopic skills in IBD care through an observational fellowship at Amsterdam UMC

Awardee: Sara Ramos Lopes
Host Supervisor: Krisztina Gecse and Geert D'Haens

Affiliation: Unidade Local de Saúde da Arrábida – Hospital São Bernardo

SHORT SUMMARY

I had the privilege of undertaking a six-week fellowship at Amsterdam UMC under the supervision of Prof. Krisztina Gecse and Prof. Geert D'Haens.
This training period provided exposure to a high volume of patients with complex pathology, enabling me to develop both knowledge and confidence in managing challenging cases, including refractory disease, perianal Crohn's Disease and concomitant autoimmune conditions, as well as in the management of adverse effects. I would particularly like to highlight the invaluable experience of multidisciplinary discussions, which were patient centered and focused on delivering the highest standard of care. Furthermore, I would like to emphasise the benefits of the experience of working in a clinical environment in which research is fully integrated into and complements daily clinical practice: this represented a unique personal and professional opportunity.
I am very grateful to my supervisors, the entire team and ECCO for their support, which greatly contributed to advancing my knowledge and clinical skills.

ECCO Travel Award

Clinical Observership in IBD at the Gastroenterology Department in Aarhus University Hospital

Awardee: Sofia Rellou
Host Supervisor: Mette Julsgaard

Affiliation: General Oncology Hospital of Kifisia Oi Agioi Anargyroi, Greece

SHORT SUMMARY

I am truly grateful for the ECCO Travel Award, which gave me the opportunity to spend two inspiring months at the Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Aarhus University Hospital. The department delivers a high-level IBD service, and from the outset I was welcomed into a collaborative and supportive environment. Colleagues were consistently approachable and enthusiastic, generously sharing their clinical reasoning, discussing management strategies and facilitating communication when needed, including translating during consultations when my Danish skills were limited. Many patients were also open to consultations in English, further enriching my experience. During my stay, I observed the IBD outpatient clinic, inpatient care and endoscopy services. I also had the opportunity to observe intestinal ultrasound, double-balloon enteroscopy and faecal microbiota transplantation, which are not yet well established in my home institution. The opportunity to engage in discussions on key IBD topics, such as JAK inhibitors in pregnancy and dual biological therapy, provided me with valuable insights into contemporary clinical decision-making.
I would like to sincerely thank Professor Mette Julsgaard for her guidance and support in making this exceptional experience possible. I would highly recommend this department to future ECCO Travel Award candidates.

ECCO Travel Award

Advancing Intestinal Ultrasound in Türkiye: Education, Research, and International Collaboration

Awardee: Gülden Bilican
Host Supervisor: Stephan L. Haas, Francesca Bresso

Affiliation: Gazi University Hospital, Ankara, Turkey

SHORT SUMMARY

During my ECCO Travel Award visit, I spent three months at Karolinska Institutet under the supervision of Stephan L. Haas and Francesca Bresso. The primary aim was to advance my expertise in intestinal ultrasound (IUS) and to increase awareness of its clinical utility among gastroenterologists in Türkiye.

During this period, we conducted a nationwide survey study assessing IUS awareness and utilization, which was subsequently published. International collaboration was further strengthened through educational activities, including two IUS workshops led by Dr. Haas at national congresses in Türkiye.

The visit also enabled collaboration with my mentor Nurulamin Noor at University of Cambridge, leading to the initiation of a new multicenter research project involving Gazi, Cambridge, and Karolinska.

This experience substantially improved my clinical skills, academic productivity, and capacity for international research collaboration.

ECCO Travel Award

ECCO Travel Award for L'Institut des MICI (Paris IBD Centre)

Awardee: Joana Revés
Principal Investigator: Professor Yoram Bouhnik

Affiliation: Gastroenterologist at Hospital Beatriz Ângelo, Loures, Portugal

SHORT SUMMARY

Between May and June 2024, I had the chance to spend time at the Paris IBD Centre (Institut des Maladies Inflammatoires Chroniques de l'Intestin) in Paris, guided by Professor Yoram Bouhnik and his fantastic team. With the support of Professor Xavier Treton, Dr Carmen Stefanescu, and Dr Mathilde Cohen, I joined outpatient clinics, discussed patient follow-up, spent time in the infusion unit, observed hospitalised patients, and attended endoscopic procedures in IBD.

One of the highlights was taking part in weekly multidisciplinary meetings, including inspiring discussions with the surgical team. I also attended research meetings and was exposed to new therapies in clinical trials, which were very enriching.

Beyond the learning experience, what truly made this fellowship special was the people. The team was welcoming, supportive, and fun. I not only learned a lot but also made great friends along the way.

I'm very grateful for this experience and would highly recommend it!

ECCO Travel Award

Future Hope for Slovak Patients

Awardee: Samuel Majna
Host Supervisor: Milan Lukáš

Affiliation: University Hospital Bratislava, Slovakia

SHORT SUMMARY

I was pleased to visit the IBD centre ISCARE in Prague, Czech Republic for a period of one month in March 2025, thanks to the ECCO Travel Award. The role of my internship was to develop my knowledge of the use of intestinal ultrasonography (IUS), to witness the endoscopic treatment of intestinal strictures and to gain a fuller understanding of the role of these procedures in the management of patients with IBD. I think that the Travel Award helped me to incorporate IUS into my routine practice. Thanks to the many opportunities to watch interesting endoscopic procedures that I had, I became more deeply engaged in the topic of endoscopic management of intestinal strictures in IBD and also the screening of dysplasia using dye-based endoscopy. I truly appreciated my stay; I not only received a lot of information but also made many new friendships.

N-ECCO Travel Award

Insightful observership as an Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) nurse at the University of Nottingham

Awardee: Tobias Mooslechner
Host Supervisor: Shellie Radford, Ana Ibarra

Affiliation: General Hospital of Vienna, Austria

SHORT SUMMARY

Last August, I completed an insightful observership as an Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) nurse at the University of Nottingham. This valuable experience was made possible through the generous funding of the ECCO Travel Award, for which I am incredibly grateful.

During my visit, I had the privilege of exploring both the clinical and the academic side of care. At the IBD Flare Clinic, I observed efficient, rapid-access protocols designed for patients experiencing acute disease exacerbations. Additionally, visiting the IBD Research Department provided me with a deeper understanding of cutting-edge clinical trials and translational research aimed at improving patient outcomes.

The entire team at the University of Nottingham took exceptional care of me. Their outstanding support, guidance and willingness to share their expertise greatly enhanced my professional development. I have returned to my home institution with inspired perspectives and refined clinical knowledge that will elevate our own IBD nursing practices.

D-ECCO Travel Award

Visit to Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Awardee: Fleur Wijers

Host Supervisor: Dearhaile O'Hanlon

Affiliation: Amsterdam University Medical Centers, Dept. Nutrition & Dietetics, the Neithelands

SHORT SUMMARY

I used the Travel Grant to spend two weeks visiting Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital in London in January 2025. During my stay, I had the opportunity to observe various IBD outpatient clinics (with dietitians, gastroenterologists and surgeons), attend multidisciplinary team meetings and observe an ileocaecal resection!

I learned more about the use of nutritional therapy with exclusive enteral nutrition (EEN) in various situations. I learned that EEN is highly effective and that patient adherence is good when supported by frequent follow-up appointments with dietitians.

I also observed group consultations for patients with coeliac disease and IBS. This is an efficient way to provide patients with practical guidance and support while bridging the waiting period before an initial individual consultation.

I felt extremely welcome, and it was a very enjoyable and educational experience! Many thanks to all the colleagues who made this experience such a wonderful one!

D-ECCO Travel Award

Nutrtion in IBD

Awardee: Jessica Fitzpatrick
Host Supervisor: João Sabino

Affiliation: Monash University/ Alfred Health Gastroenterology

SHORT SUMMARY

During a two-week visit to KU Leuven in 2024 with Associate Professor Joao Sabino, I had the opportunity to observe a world-renowned Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) clinic and multidisciplinary care model. A major focus of the visit was learning about their perioperative nutrition protocols for IBD patients, particularly strategies used to optimise surgical outcomes. I also shared body composition assessment techniques currently used in Australia, including muscle ultrasound assessment in clinical practice and research. The visit facilitated valuable knowledge exchange between our centres and has resulted in an ongoing international collaboration, including the hosting of one of KU Leuven's Master's students in Australia for a three-month placement. This experience strengthened my clinical and research skills in IBD nutrition, body composition assessment and international collaborative practice.

ECCO Travel Award

Clinical research fellowship in Inflammatory Bowel Disease at the INFINY Institute

Awardee: Maria José Temido
Host Supervisor: Laurent Peyrin-Biroulet

Affiliation: Unidade Local de Saúde de Coimbra, Portugal

SHORT SUMMARY

During April and May 2024, I completed a clinical research fellowship in Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) at the INFINY Institute, which is integrated within the Centre Hospitalier Régional Universitaire de Nancy, under the supervision of Professor Laurent Peyrin-Biroulet and his internationally recognised team. The fellowship aimed to develop skills in clinical research in IBD through participation in retrospective and prospective studies, including multicentre projects, as well as scientific manuscript writing. I was actively involved in ongoing research activities and benefited from excellent mentorship and working conditions. This experience resulted in the publication of four scientific articles in high-impact international journals and the initiation of additional ongoing research projects. The fellowship represented a highly enriching and formative experience, strengthening my interest in IBD research and providing valuable skills to support future research development within the IBD Unit at ULS Coimbra.

ECCO Travel Award

Mesalazine dose modification based on faecal calprotectin levels in patients with ulcerative colitis in clinical remission

Awardee: Gisela Piñero
Host Supervisor: Eugeni Domènech

Home Institution: Hospital Provincial del Centenario, Santa Fe, Argentina

SHORT SUMMARY

During my three-month visit to the Inflammatory Bowel Disease Unit at Hospital Universitari Germans Trias i Pujol in Badalona, I had the opportunity to observe high-quality clinical care and actively participate in a retrospective research project on mesalazine dose modification based on faecal calprotectin levels in patients with Ulcerative Colitis in clinical remission. This work subsequently led to the publication of an original article.

The visit was highly rewarding both personally and professionally. It allowed me to gain first-hand insight into the organisation and functioning of a GETECCU-certified IBD Unit in Spain, while also strengthening my clinical, methodological and research skills.

The impact of this experience has been long-lasting: I later returned to the same institution, where I am currently undertaking my PhD focused on Crohn’s Disease and postoperative recurrence.

ECCO Travel Award

Intercontinental contact

Awardee: Ivanna Candel
Host Supervisor: Séverine Vermiere

Home Institution: Bonorino Udaondo's Hospital, Buenos Aires, Argentina

SHORT SUMMARY

My visit to the IBD Unit at University Hospitals Leuven was truly a turning point in my understanding and vision of Inflammatory Bowel Disease care.

I had the opportunity to observe a highly organised service with clear leadership, outstanding teamwork and remarkably fluid clinical functioning. From the commitment and openness of each professional to the multidisciplinary meetings, every aspect of the unit reflected excellence in patient-centred care and collaboration.

This experience was deeply enriching and filled me with enthusiasm and inspiration for my own professional development in IBD. It allowed me to strengthen my clinical perspective, gain insight into advanced multidisciplinary management and better understand the importance of structured coordination within the group and with specialised units.

I am sincerely grateful to have lived this experience, which has had a significant impact on both my clinical approach and my future career aspirations in the field of Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

ECCO Travel Award

Genetic atlas of inflammatory bowel disease: The translation of genetic into biological function

Awardee: Marie Vibeke Vestergaard
Host Supervisor: James Lee

Home Institution: Aalborg University, PREDICT, Copenhagen, Denmark

SHORT SUMMARY

I had the pleasure of visiting Dr. James Lee's lab at the Francis Crick institute.

During my stay I learned how to work with epigenetics data and, in general, I greatly expanded my knowledge of genetics. During my stay, I managed to implement a bioinformatics pipeline for analysis of epigenetics data which is being applied in an ongoing collaborative study. I gained an expanded insight into the work process in a wet lab and acquired valuable new professional connections.

The visit helped in establishing a very productive collaboration between our research groups and, besides the mentioned study, we have been collaborating on a study now published in Cell Reports Medicine. This study has received great attention both from academic colleagues and from the general public, and to date has been mentioned in more than 180 international news outlets.

ECCO Travel Award

Leuven-Belgrade IBD cooperation

Awardee: Nikola Panic
Host Supervisor: Séverine Vermeire

Home Institution: University Clinic "Dr Dragisa Misovic-Dedinje", Belgarde, Serbia

SHORT SUMMARY

During October 2023, I had the privilege of visiting KU Leuven through the European Crohn's and Colitis Organisation Travel Grant programme, where I trained under Séverine Vermeire in one of Europe's leading IBD centres. From the very first day, I was warmly welcomed by the entire team, whose openness and willingness to share knowledge made this experience truly exceptional.

During my stay, I gained valuable insight into the organisation of complex multidisciplinary care for patients with Inflammatory Bowel Diseases, including outpatient clinics, advanced endoscopy, teamwork between different specialties and ongoing scientific and research projects. Observing such a highly coordinated approach significantly broadened my professional perspective.

I am deeply grateful to ECCO for providing this outstanding opportunity, which has greatly contributed to improving the care of IBD patients in my hospital in Serbia and inspired further professional development and international collaboration.

N-ECCO Travel Award

Developing strategies to enhance sexual well-being care for people living with IBD

Awardee: Simona Fourie
Host Supervisor: Debra Jackson

Home Institution:University of Oxford, UK

SHORT SUMMARY

The Travel Award supported the development of strategies to enhance sexual well-being care for individuals living with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). Visits to both a public and a private hospital in Sydney in October 2023 facilitated discussions with healthcare professionals regarding current approaches to sexual well-being within IBD and wider gastroenterology services. The exchange of experience identified several shared challenges across healthcare systems, including the limited routine integration of sexual well-being into clinical practice, resource constraints and barriers to culturally diverse patient population engagement in discussions concerning sensitive issues. A particular area of focus was the limited availability of formal training for specialist nurses, which was recognised as a significant gap by both host institutions and formed an important component of the professional exchange. Although differences existed in service structures and models of IBD support, commonly delivered by gastroenterology/colorectal specialist nurses with IBD expertise, the visit highlighted shared priorities in advancing holistic, patient-centred IBD care and reinforced the importance of integrating sexual well-being support within routine services.