

ESMO European Integration Fellowship Report

The Royal Marsden NHS Trust, London, UK

07th May – 15th June 2018

Observership at the Lung Unit

Fellow: dr Jelena Spasic
Institute for Oncology and Radiology of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia

Mentor(s): dr Sanjay Popat
RMH Chelsea Lung Unit

Introduction: When I first learned of the ESMO European Integration Fellowship, I saw it as a great opportunity for oncologists from developing countries to spend some time at a leading cancer center in Europe. The Royal Marsden has for me, always represented just such an institution, a place of excellence in oncology care, where I can learn from the best in the field. I have always found direct interaction with leading experts to be the best way of improving my abilities and furthering my career as a medical oncologist, so this fellowship was the perfect way to achieve that.

Main part: During my stay with the Lung team at the RMH, I was involved with all aspects of the everyday work with thoracic cancer patients, under the mentorship of dr Sanjay Popat. I was primarily based in Chelsea, while every Monday was spent at the Kingston satellite unit which is a part of the RMH Lung Unit. At the Kingston hospital, I observed work at the outpatient clinic during treatment and follow-up and the work of the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT). In Chelsea, I observed work of the outpatient on-treatment and follow-up clinics, Day Unit Ward, MDTs and in-patient treatment. Every Tuesday, I attended the MDT at the Brompton Hospital, which involved discussing various thoracic pathology, treatment and follow-up decisions and included valuable input from pathologists, radiologists, thoracic surgeons, medical and clinical oncologists. I also attended regular Unit Research Meetings where treatment of trial patients was discussed, both of observational and interventional studies which are many at the RMH. I was part of decision making regarding treatment options and management of complications. Many of these treatments are not yet available in my country, so it was incredibly helpful to see them first-hand. I also saw many patients with rare thoracic malignancies such as mesothelioma and thymic malignancies and was involved in their treatment and management. I gained insight into the organisation of a comprehensive cancer center including integrated palliative care and nurse-specialist care. I was able to ask questions but also to offer my thoughts and opinions which was incredibly rewarding and made me feel as part of the team.

Conclusion: During my stay at the RMH, I expanded my knowledge and abilities regarding all aspects of treatment and follow-up of patients with lung cancer and other thoracic malignancies, including molecular analyses, systemic treatment, advanced radiotherapy and treatment of complications. I also learned a lot about institutional organisation and community organisation and home care options. I feel more confident about my abilities to use new treatment options and their complications once some of them become available in Serbia.

This visit has also provided me with new friendships which I value on a personal level, and I hope my stay will lead to future collaboration between my home Institute and The Royal Marsden.

Many thanks to everyone at the Lung Unit especially dr Nadia Yousef, , dr Nazda Tokaca , dr Maria Coakley and the wonderful nurses Jo, Sophie and Derya, for making me feel as part of the team and always having the time for a chat, even in the busiest of days! I hope we will see eachother again.

A special thank you to an amazing mentor dr Sanjay Popat, a great doctor but more importantly a great man, who always made me feel welcome and treated me as an equal. I loved our discussions and seeing the way your mind works. It has been an amazing privilege and a great pleasure working with and learning from you.

In the end, thank you to ESMO for providing me with this opportunity, it is much appreciated.



Belgrade, July 2018

Dr Jelena Spasic