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## ESMO Clinical Unit Visit Report

### Breast Unit - Champalimaud Clinical Center Lisbon, Portugal

23th March to 4th May 2018

#### Clinical Unit Visit

**Fellow:** Roberto Di Cicilia  
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**Mentors:** Fatima Cardoso (Director), Maria João Cardoso, Maurício Chumbo, Berta Sousa, Joana Ribeiro, Marco Possanzini, Celeste Alves, Eva Batista  
Breast Unit, Champalimaud Clinical Center, Lisbon (Portugal)

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This was my very first experience in a clinical center abroad and when I started planning my Clinical Unit Visit, I was sure that I wanted to spend the six weeks with Dr. Fatima Cardoso who is one of the leading experts in the management of breast cancer.

In my country I work in a “young” but very attractive Hospital that built up a recent cancer center called “CORE” that means “Centro Onco-Ematologico di Reggio Emilia” (Reggio Emilia Onco-Hematologic Center). Since about two years I’m the youngest of four medical oncologists involved in the clinical management of breast cancer patients. Furthermore, the Hospital where I work in is one of the reference centers in my region for the treatment of breast tumors so I asked myself how I could acquire new skills and translate it in tools to improve the decision making processes, patients’ clinical management and contribute to the growing up and building of a very competitive Breast Unit.

For those reasons I applied for the ESMO Clinical Unit Visit with Dr. Fatima (I love the Portuguese way to call doctors) and when she offered the chance to visit the Champalimaud Clinical Center I didn’t hesitate because I was sure it could provide me interesting opportunities to learn different ways of working and focusing on multidisciplinary management of breast cancer in a very consolidated Breast Unit reality.

During my six weeks stay in Lisbon, my mentor Dr. Fatima Cardoso organized a structured programme for my visit so I was included in every aspect of work in this Breast Unit of the Champalimaud Clinical Center.

My activities included:

- on Monday breast medical oncology consultation including new patients, clinical trial patients, patients in follow-up and patients on treatment with Dr. Maurício Chumbo, Dr. Berta Sousa or Dr. Joana Ribeiro.
- on Tuesday morning breast medical oncology consultation including new patients, trial patients, patients in follow-up and patients on treatment with Dr. Fatima Cardoso.
- on Tuesday afternoon breast cancer cases discussion in radiotherapy with Dr. Marco Possanzini. We talked about new techniques, guidelines and personal experiences to manage these patients.
- on Wednesday morning breast imaging consultation with Dr. Celeste Alves and Dr. Eva Batista. During this time we saw mainly newly diagnosed patients, screenings, follow-up and neoadjuvant chemotherapy re-staging; patients underwent mammography, breast Ultra-sound, breast MRI and/or biopsy procedures and marking of primary breast cancer lesions.

- on Wednesday afternoon multidisciplinary meetings. All breast cancer cases who needed a discussion (including pre-op; post-op and metastatic cases are discussed by the staff from all the specialties involved in the management of breast cancer patients including nurses and non-medical staff.
- on Thursday morning at 8.00 am I attended to the Journal Club. The attendees in turn weekly reviewed papers reporting an important clinical and/or translational article published in a major journal. Everyone added his comments and considerations. After the meeting we started medical oncology consultation until end of the afternoon with Dr. Maurício Chumbo, Dr. Berta Sousa or Dr. Joana Ribeiro.
- on Friday morning breast surgery consultation with Professor Maria João Cardoso including new patients, counseling for hereditary breast cancer risk, patients evaluation after surgery and patients on clinical trials or in follow-up.
- on Friday afternoon, private study. In last weeks I used this time to review patients with breast cancer who underwent neoadjuvant chemotherapy to carry out a retrospective study that will be published in the future.

During my stay at Champalimaud Clinical Center I really appreciated the opportunity to actively participate in consultations and multi-disciplinary meetings emphasizing the importance of joint working with other specialists to deliver high quality individualized patient care. The humanity with which one relate to the patient, caring, the quality of the time that is dedicated to them, truly impressed me. Furthermore, attending to a "Mama Help" session called "Hormonal treatment – who needs and for how long" I found out this interesting organization made of very different people. "Mama Help" is a patient support organisation, presided by Prof. Maria João Cardoso, that has as main mission to improve the quality of life of breast cancer patients, their families and friends applying the concept called integrative medicine. Very fascinating and helpful, absolutely to export.

To conclude, this Clinical Unit Visit was a great opportunity for my professional growth and for training my Portuguese and I would recommend it to all young oncologist who usually work in hospital where a true Breast Unit isn't yet a reality.

Thank you for the way Dr. Fatima Cardoso received me and I hope I will be able to use what I have learned in my clinical practice. Moreover, I want to thank you to all my colleagues for this unforgettable human and medical experience, nurses and non-medical staff particularly Sofia de Bragança for supporting me and Dr. Assia Konsoulova for her precious friendship and support as well as her coffee!

At last but not least I would like to thank the ESMO Fellowship and Award Committee for providing the indispensable financial support. The grant has offered me the opportunity to further extend my knowledge and skills in clinical breast cancer management approach.

*Reggio Emilia, 28/06/2018*

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