

ESMO Clinical Unit Visit Report

Multidisciplinary Breast Centre, Department of General Medical Oncology, University Hospitals Leuven, Belgium

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Clinical and translational research in breast cancer: focus on the treatment of the elderly patients.

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Thanks to ESMO Fellowship Oncology Programme I had an opportunity to spend 6 weeks in Multidisciplinary Breast Centre of Department of General Medical Oncology in The University Hospital in Leuven, Belgium, one of the leading cancer centers in Europe. My mentor was Professor Hans Wildiers who is the world-renowned expert in the area of geriatric oncology and breast cancer, president of the International Society of Geriatric Oncology. As I am a medical oncologist working for more than 10 years with cancer patients and one of my areas of interest is geriatric oncology it was a great chance for me to gain additional experience in the treatment of elderly patients with breast cancer. I also wanted to find out how does the work of an oncologist look like in other country and I think that kind of experience is very important in medical carrier, allowing broadening horizons and starting international cooperation in research and within oncological societies.

During 6 weeks of my fellowship in the host institute I was able to learn how to professionally assess and treat geriatric patients with breast cancer. The population of patients with breast cancer in the elderly is constantly growing worldwide and ability to communicate, assess and give treatment to this very special group of patients is essential nowadays. Another very important aspect of being a fellow was that I was able to be a part of a multidisciplinary team and have an opportunity to observe how the treatment of breast cancer is organized in one of the best European hospitals. The programme of my fellowship was diversified and therefore very interesting. On Mondays I was at the day hospital where about 65 breast cancer patients received therapy and about 8 patients with CT/PET/MRI scans were discussed for further treatment. On other days I participated in post-operation consultation and multidisciplinary team meetings (general medical oncology and breast cancer) where about 60 patients were discussed on treatment, both adjuvant and metastatic. I also participated in general breast consultations where I worked with Professor Hans Wildiers and on several occasions I had a chance to work with Doctor Kevin

Punie who is a medical oncologist also specializing in breast cancer. He allowed me to take part in his genetic counseling where I could see the patients with rare genetic syndromes and cancer. During my visit in Leuven I had also opportunity to attend weekly seminars and lectures on various topics and to visit research centre of the hospital. I had a possibility to attend some workshops with the best breast cancer specialists in Belgium. I was also invited by my mentor to co-author 3 publications and one of them was already submitted during my fellowship.

In general I think that this fellowship was a great opportunity not only to observe and learn the principles of geriatric oncology, treatment of breast cancer and working in a multidisciplinary team abroad but also to broaden my knowledge in the fields I am interested in. I hope that this visit is the beginning of a multicenter and multinational cooperation. I am sure that the knowledge and skills in geriatric oncology of breast cancer that I got during the fellowship will help to improve the care of the elderly patients with breast cancer in my home Department and will make me one of the experts and leaders of geriatric oncology in my country. I also hope that working for some time in multinational environment will help me to start multicenter and multinational projects in research in the future. I truly believe that to achieve a success in oncology and to improve cancer care worldwide we must cooperate and share our knowledge and experiences. And such fellowship as ESMO Clinical Unit Visit is one of the best ways to do so.

Lastly, I would like to thank ESMO for this great opportunity, my home Institute and the Heads of my Department for allowing me to take part in this fellowship programme and my Mentor for the time dedicated and knowledge and experienced shared.

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Roman Dubianski

Professor Hans Wildiers



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