

## **ESMO Palliative Care Fellowship (March 2020)**

**Helena Luna Pais**

### **FINAL REPORT**

Home Institute: Centro Hospitalar Lisboa Norte - Hospital Santa Maria (HSM-CHLN), Lisbon, Portugal

Host Institute: Clínica Universidad de Navarra (CUN), Pamplona, Spain

Mentor: Dr. Carlos Centeno

### **Introduction**

Thanks to the ESMO Fellowship in Palliative Care programme I was able to go for a one-month fellowship in the Palliative Care Unit of Clínica Universidad de Navarra, in Pamplona, Spain.

My fellowship was abruptly interrupted by the COVID pandemic, but even with a stay that was shorter than expected, I learnt a lot.

### **Goals or aims**

The main goal of the Unit is the care of patients with advanced and irreversible diseases, with a vision based on the dignity of the person and the professional care of the patient and his family.

The Palliative Care Unit of Clinica Universidad de Navarra is composed of a multidisciplinary team which supports around 300 patients a year and works in strict collaboration with the Oncology Department. Many patients are admitted and accompanied by both teams throughout their hospital stay and the Palliative Care team is present twice a week at the daily meeting about inpatients. In addition, I would like to highlight that the Palliative Care team provides support to the Clinical Trial Unit.

### **Description of the time spent at host institute**

Clinica Universidad de Navarra has a Phase I Unit (responsible for many Phase I clinical trials). During my fellowship, I had the opportunity to see that many patients included in Phase I trials also received support from the Palliative Care team. Besides the activity in Clinic, the Palliative Care team provides training to fellows like me, since it began in 2004, it has received people from 24 countries.

The team is also responsible for the training of medical students, I had the opportunity to attend one of their classes and it was very interesting and perspective opening.

Investigation is also a cornerstone of this Palliative Care Unit. Professor Carlos Centeno implemented and is the principal investigator of the ATLANTES programme. The main goal of this programme is to promote, both in society and in Medicine, a positive mentality regarding the care of patients with advanced and irreversible diseases.

Other activities include a weekly Journal Club where an important article in this field is presented, the team meets to discuss this in a collaborative learning environment.

The normal workday starts with a meeting with all the professionals of the Palliative Care team in which the plan of the day is presented, patients that will come for consult are presented and also the hospitalised patients are accompanied by this team. They talk about the main challenges of each case and discuss possible solutions. During my two weeks, I integrated with the team and had the opportunity to accompany both ambulatory and hospitalised patients. For two days I also accompanied the activity of this team's psychologist. This opportunity gave me important tools for difficult conversations with patients about their point of view of the disease, prognosis and the impact on their quality of life.

## **Conclusion**

Although my stay was short, I consider this fellowship of added value to my formation as an Oncologist. It gave me experience of different ways of articulation between Oncology and Palliative Care that I consider of extreme utility. I could observe difficult conversations and learn communication techniques essential to accompany oncologic patients. I was also able to learn about the therapeutic management of difficult-to-control symptoms.

In conclusion, this fellowship definitely motivated me to broaden my knowledge in this important field of Palliative and Supportive Care.