

## **EAACI Fellowships: An insider's view**

I was lucky enough to receive a three-month EAACI Fellowship to join the Pediatric Allergy Department at St Mary's Hospital, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, London, under the mentorship of Marta Vazquez-Ortiz.

I chose this allergy department, led by Adnan Custovic, because it is one of the largest tertiary referral centres in Europe and, excitingly, it has a strong multidisciplinary approach to children with complex allergies. Here, pediatric allergists, nurses, dietitians, researchers and allied specialists work together in one unit.

I learnt so much from the team's expertise in multisystem allergic disease, complex food allergy, difficult eczema, difficult asthma, adolescent transitioning and patient education. I saw the value of joint clinics, where paediatric allergists see patients together with a dermatologist, pulmonologist or gastroenterologist to improve the quality of complex patient care. I also had exposure to a number of referrals from the Paediatric ward and Intensive Care Unit, as well as to over 70 day-case procedures per week in our Allergy Day Unit. I spent 40-50 hours per week in the department, including the Allergy Day Unit and the clinics.

I really enjoyed learning different strategies on educating patients to self-manage their allergies from the nurses (including scenario-based anaphylaxis training and practical advice on how-to-use inhalers, nasal sprays, adrenaline autoinjectors and eczema creams). Observing dietitians covering nutritional assessments, food avoidance and alternative cooking advice was very practically helpful. I saw the differences in presentation and management of allergy in the United Kingdom. It was fascinating to see very frequent severe eczema and complex 'allergic gut disease' cases in a highly multicultural population.

I joined weekly multidisciplinary meetings where complex cases and controversial topics were discussed. I also observed the team's active research portfolio, especially on food allergy.

I helped the allergy team in a service development project, which included two clinical audits, aiming at improve consistency and cost-effectiveness in the food and drug challenge service. I audited children booked for newly developed supervised feeds and low risk drug challenges against agreed criteria, which has enabled to feedback this back to the team to improve practice.

I would like to thank Paediatric Allergy Department at St Mary's Hospital for spending these three months with them.

Finally, I had the opportunity to join some excellent lectures from the reputed *Postgraduate courses in Allergy* at Imperial College London. I would highly recommend these courses to anyone pursuing a career in allergy.

This Fellowship has been one of the best opportunities I have had in my training. My time in this dynamic centre was hugely inspiring and valuable for my future career as a highly qualified allergy specialist. I have developed advanced skills to use a multidisciplinary approach to manage complex allergies. I would strongly recommend this experience to junior allergists and pediatricians keen to learn from a highly specialised and motivated multidisciplinary team.

I remember to acknowledge EAACI in any future publication which could relate to the Fellowship.

Maria Dolores Guerra Vilaplana

EAACI Clinical Fellowship Awardee 2018