

EAACI Clinical Fellowship 2026 – Final Report

Project Title: Urticaria with or without Angioedema: Two Different Nosological Entities?

Fellow: Eralda Lekli, Albania

Type and location of Fellowship: Clinical Fellowship, Naples, Italy

Duration: 15 June 2026 – 15 September 2026

Host Institution: Department of Internal Medicine, Allergy and Clinical Immunology

Ambulatory Unit, AORN Antonio Cardarelli, Naples, Italy

Supervisor: Dr. Maria Bova

Fellowship Overview

I had the privilege of being selected for the EAACI Clinical Fellowship 2026, a highly regarded international clinical training programme in Allergy and Clinical Immunology. The fellowship provided me with the opportunity to undertake a clinical fellowship at the Department of Internal Medicine and the Allergy and Clinical Immunology Ambulatory Unit of AORN Antonio Cardarelli, Naples, Italy.

The main focus of the fellowship was “Urticaria with or without Angioedema: Two Different Nosological Entities?”, exploring whether angioedema represents a distinct clinical phenotype within chronic spontaneous urticaria (CSU). Particular attention was given to differences in clinical presentation, disease activity and course, underlying mechanisms, biomarkers and treatment response between CSU patients with and without angioedema.

This clinical fellowship represented an important opportunity for advanced clinical training within a specialized European referral centre for Allergy and Clinical Immunology. It allowed me to gain experience in the diagnosis and management of complex allergic and immunological diseases while further developing my clinical, scientific and professional skills.

Clinical Setting and Activities

During the fellowship, I observed the clinical activities of the Allergy and Clinical Immunology Ambulatory Unit and the Department of Internal Medicine. A typical working day in the outpatient clinic extended from approximately 08:00 to 15:30, with exposure to approximately 18–20 patients per day.

A particularly valuable component of the fellowship was participation in telemedicine follow-up consultations. This was a new experience for me and provided practical insight into the integration of remote consultations into the longitudinal management of patients with chronic allergic and immunological diseases and particularly to CSU and follow up of self-administration of new therapies.

The clinical environment also provided valuable exposure to conditions beyond the main focus of the fellowship, including patients with atopic dermatitis, secondary immunodeficiencies, respiratory and food allergy, eosinophilic esophagitis under biologic drugs which are not yet available in my home country. Patient journey and differential diagnosis with multidisciplinary teams, genetic testing for hereditary angioedema, primary immunodeficiencies, autoimmune and autoinflammatory disorders and treatment protocols were fruitful and useful experience.

Clinical and Research Experience

A major component of the fellowship was observation of the clinical assessment and management of patients with a chronic urticaria, particularly chronic spontaneous urticaria (CSU), as well as different forms of angioedema. I had the opportunity to observe and discuss more than 100 patients with CSU, which allowed me to appreciate the clinical heterogeneity of the disease in terms of presentation, disease activity, treatment response and individual patient burden. Through these cases, I developed a more structured approach to clinical assessment, including evaluation of symptom characteristics and duration, presence or absence of angioedema, possible triggers, previous treatments, treatment response and the need for therapeutic escalation. I also gained practical experience in the assessment of disease control, treatment response, safety monitoring and long-term follow-up of patients receiving advanced therapies.

During the fellowship, I participated in data collection for two clinical studies related to urticaria and angioedema. The first addressed quality of life in patients with CSU, in which I observed study procedures and collected completed patient questionnaires. The second investigated the uPA/uPAR system in isolated angioedema and CSU with angioedema, providing insight into potential biological mechanisms underlying the disease. The preparation of related scientific presentations and publications is ongoing and will contribute to forthcoming scientific outputs.

Conclusion and Self-Reflection

The EAACI Clinical Fellowship 2026 was a highly valuable experience that significantly strengthened my clinical, scientific and professional development in Allergy and Clinical Immunology. It improved my confidence in the structured assessment of CSU and angioedema, broadened my understanding of immunodeficiencies and rare immune-mediated diseases, and provided practical experience with advanced therapies, multidisciplinary care and telemedicine. The fellowship also strengthened my clinical research skills and reinforced my interest in continuing academic and translational research in urticaria, angioedema and Clinical Immunology. I intend to transfer the knowledge and practical approaches gained in Italy to my clinical practice and share them through educational scientific activities. The experience has therefore provided not only individual professional growth but also a valuable foundation for contributing to the further development of local expertise and patient care.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Maria Bova for her mentorship, guidance and continuous support throughout the fellowship, building on our previous collaboration through the EAACI Mentor–Mentee Programme in 2025-2026. I am also grateful to the entire team of the Department of Internal Medicine and the Allergy and Clinical Immunology Ambulatory Unit at AORN Antonio Cardarelli for their hospitality, collegiality and willingness to share their clinical and scientific expertise. Finally, I sincerely thank EAACI for awarding me the Clinical Fellowship 2026 and for providing this valuable opportunity for international clinical training, scientific development and professional exchange. The knowledge, experience and professional relationships gained through this fellowship will continue to support my future clinical and research activities.

Eralda Lekli

EAACI Clinical Fellow 2026