

SAKK / Janssen Fellowship 2015

The main purpose of my fellowship consisted essentially in establishing and strengthening cooperations in the field of melanoma between my institution at the University Hospital of Zurich and other centers of excellence in the world. In fact, in our more and more interconnected world, clinical studies and translational researches are increasingly carried out in cooperation between different health institutions across the globe, enhancing the perspectives of treatment for the patients.

In this spirit, I had the great chance to spend a period of two months at each of USCF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Francisco, under lead of Prof. Adil Daud and the Cancer Center of the Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, under the lead of Prof. Keith Flaherty. There, I could participate to the daily activities of the medical team.

It was for me a priceless experience to have the possibility to exchange with the key opinion leaders of these respective institutions. This personal contact is very inspiring as it allows for a different interaction than the reading of a publication. Also, my daily activities within these centers gave me the chance to receive numerous inputs from my colleagues on how issues or problems that are common in all melanoma centers are dealt with. I gained significant knowledge in the treatment methods/processes or the different organizational models; as a result, I have now a broader spectrum of the various possibilities available to handle melanoma related matters.

It was also very interesting to note certain differences among these melanoma centers. The role of the nurses, for instance, in the treatments of melanoma patients can vary from one center to another. Nurses are sometimes more integrated in the treatment processes and given larger responsibilities, thereby acknowledging the key role that they have in the patients' treatment. Also, the decision-making for a treatment may differ across the centers. Certain physicians may have an inclination to innovation and prescribe a drug, the clinical results of which are not fully known yet, while others may have the more conservative tendency to rely on existing well established treatments.

I have also identified some constants across the centers, including my institution. Regular cross-divisional meetings are organized to allow for an efficient information flow in the best interest of the patients' needs. Also, the clinical studies, researches activities and treatments in the field of melanoma require a full team of professionals, each of them leaning to achieve the same goal, irrespective of its function or responsibilities. I had the great chance to meet many of these very charismatic and inspiring persons.

I am very grateful to SAKK / Janssen for its support which allowed me to live this very enriching experience.

Dr. med. Simone M. Goldinger

