

## "Building Bridges: APLAR-EULAR Exchange Program 2024"

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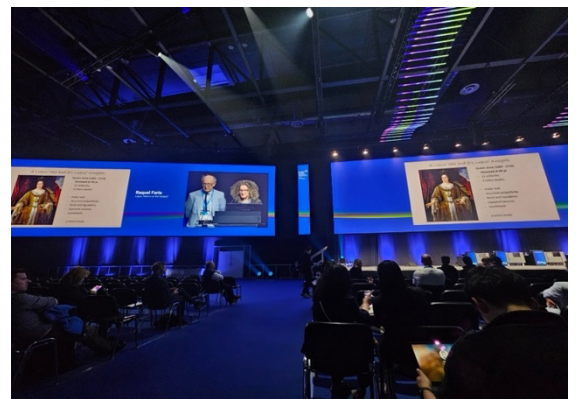
I am honored to have been selected as a delegate for the APLAR-EULAR Exchange Program, a unique opportunity to learn from experts in the field of rheumatology and gain insights into the latest research and advancements. The program, which included attending the EULAR Congress and visiting the research facility of Medical University of Vienna, have inspired me to contribute to the advancement of research in the Philippines.



During my participation in the program, I gained valuable knowledge and insights that are relevant to my practice as a pediatric rheumatologist. The key takeaways I would like to highlight are:

1. The importance of perseverance, dedication, and collaboration in completing a research project
2. The need for further studies on predicting when to discontinue and taper biologic treatments

3. The promising results of novel treatment, MAS825, for recurrent and recalcitrant Macrophage Activation Syndrome
4. The identification of new biomarkers for Macrophage Activation Syndrome, including IL-18, S100A12, and CXCL9/10
5. The dependence of tapering and withdrawal of DMARDs on treat-to-target strategies
6. The importance of the treat-to-target paradigm in chronic inflammatory diseases
7. The persistence of high flare rates after discontinuation of immunosuppression in lupus nephritis despite advances in treatment
8. The continued use of methotrexate as the first-line therapy for most common JIA subtypes despite availability of newer biologic treatments

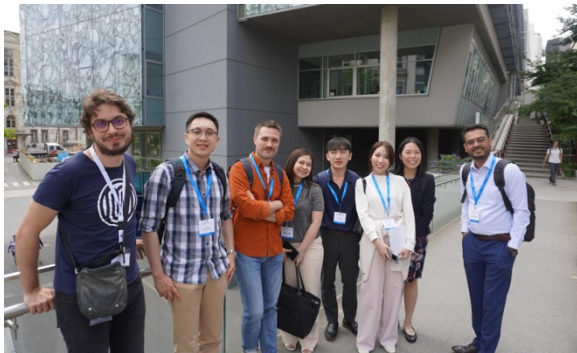


As I reflect on my experience as a delegate, I am reminded that it was not just about the knowledge gained but also about the valuable connections and relationships forged with fellow professionals from around the world. The opportunity to meet and interact with delegates from Singapore, India, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, and the United States was

truly enriching. Sharing our experiences, interests, and perspectives with one another was a wonderful way to break down professional boundaries and form meaningful connections.



The experience has given me a sense of belonging to a global community of professionals who are passionate about making a difference in the lives of people with rheumatic diseases. It is heartening to know that there are like-minded individuals who share my enthusiasm for rheumatology and are working towards similar goals.



Moreover, being part of this international network has taught me the importance of building relationships and networking in our professional lives. In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, it is essential to cultivate strong relationships with colleagues

from around the globe. These connections can lead to collaborations, mentorship, and knowledge sharing that can have a profound impact on our work and ultimately benefit our patients.



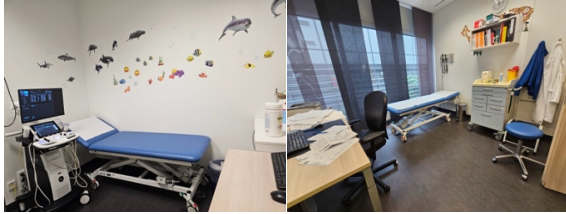
I also had the opportunity to visit the Institute of Musculoskeletal Medicine and Centre for Rheumatic Diseases in Children and Adults at the University Hospital Münster in Germany. The visit provided a rare chance to gain insight into cutting-edge research and treatment approaches being developed and implemented.



My visit began with a guided tour of the facility, which gave me an opportunity to see daily operations firsthand. I was impressed by their modern facilities and equipment. I also had the chance to meet the department heads, Dr. Föll and Dr. Pap, who shared their expertise and passion for their work.

One highlight was observing during clinic consultations. Although the conversations were mostly conducted in German, I was able to pick up on key points as the doctors have

patiently explained each patient's case to me afterwards.



My visit to this center of excellence has been an unforgettable experience that has opened my eyes to incredible work being done in this field. Despite language limitations, I was able to gain insight into daily operations, research endeavors, and ideal clinical practice at this renowned institution.

Overall, this experience has humbled me and inspired me to strive for excellence in my own research and practice. It has broadened my knowledge, challenged my perspectives, and inspired me to strive for excellence. I am grateful for this opportunity and look forward to applying what I have learned to improve care for Filipino children with rheumatologic diseases.