



ACG INTERNATIONAL TRAINING GRANT BARCELONA CLINIC LIVER CANCER: MÉS QUE UN CLÍNIC

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THE CULTURE, ART, AND URBAN DESIGN OF BARCELONA SETS IT APART FROM ANY OTHER CITY. Even the great Barcelona Football Club has a motto of “Més que un club” which means “More than a club.” It is therefore fitting that the Barcelona Clinic Liver Cancer (BCLC) has taken on significance beyond itself and served as the standard bearer of liver cancer care for nearly four decades.

As a young clinician-scientist with an interest in hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), I aspired to work with the BCLC. With the support of Dr. Maria Reig, head of the BCLC, and Ferran Torres of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, this aspiration has been realized. Over the past year and a half, I have experienced multidisciplinary liver cancer care at the BCLC, learned innovative research methods, and collaborated with giants in the field. The American College of Gastroenterology North American International GI Training Grant helped bring me to BCLC, the epicenter of liver cancer care.

The BCLC was established in 1986 by Dr. Jordi Bruix who assembled investigators and trainees from around the world to establish a truly multidisciplinary team. During my stay, Dr. Bruix reinforced that the BCLC “is about the people.” This

“This experience
imparted lessons
that will last a career,
and friendships that
will last a lifetime.”

—Dr. Moon

remarkable group, assembled by Dr. Bruix, improved our understanding of the epidemiology, diagnosis, and treatment of liver disease.

Dr. Maria Reig now leads the BCLC and was first author on the recently updated 2022 BCLC strategy for prognosis prediction and treatment recommendation. This document was widely acclaimed. But its omission of external beam radiation therapy (EBRT) prompted discussion and some consternation, particularly in the radiation oncology community. Dr. Reig identified the opportunity to address the gap in evidence for EBRT. She proposed that I work with her and Ferran Torres to perform an individual patient data (IPD) meta-analysis aiming to better characterize the role of EBRT for HCC.

Support from the ACG North American International GI Training Grant turned this remote research opportunity into an unforgettable training experience. This funding allowed me to attend the 2022 BCLC Update Conference, an interactive experience that provided clinical pearls and inspiration that I brought back to my clinic. Following the conference, I continued to meet with

Dr. Reig and Dr. Torres remotely as we worked through research planning and execution. In the spring, I returned to Barcelona for a 3-week stay. During my stay, Dr. Reig demonstrated the importance of managerial skills, in addition to clinical, educational, and research expertise, to lead a clinical group. Dr. Torres provided training on the execution of IPD meta-analyses. Dr. Bruix shared pearls from a legendary career and how he built and maintained the BCLC through its succession plan. Working alongside BCLC faculty, fellows, nurses, and research coordinators demonstrated how this team continues to push the field forward.

This visit accelerated progress on our IPD meta-analysis. With the help of co-investigators including Ted Yanagihara, Laura Dawson, and Joel Tepper, the project has made great headway and now involves more than 30 centers from 14 different countries.

This immersive training experience, made possible by the ACG Training Grant, provided firsthand knowledge of why BCLC will always be “Més que un clinic.”



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Page 51: Dr. Ferran Torres and Dr. Maria Reig in a research meeting with Dr. Moon at the BCLC. Clockwise from top: Dr. Moon and Dr. Reig at the 2022 BCLC Update Conference. Dr. Moon at the Barcelona FC match. The entrance to the Barcelona Clinic Liver Cancer