

ACG NORTH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL TRAINING GRANT: *From Miami to Oslo*

Shria Kumar, MD, MSCE

I was honored to receive a 2024 ACG North American International GI Training Grant to spend four weeks at the University of Oslo in Norway. I am an advanced endoscopist with a clinical epidemiology research program, in which I seek to develop strategies to reduce the burden of gastric and colorectal cancers. Gastrointestinal cancers are the most common form of cancer in the United States, yet prevention strategies still need optimization. My ultimate career goal is to provide personalized risk estimates to patients to reduce their risk of developing GI cancers, and to that end, I spent time training in clinical effectiveness research methodologies from the Clinical Effectiveness Research Group in Oslo. The group is led by Dr. Michael Bretthauer and Dr. Mette Kalager, two of the most well-known clinical researchers in the GI cancer prevention arena.

> "...the Oslo group is unique—it is a 'one-stop shop' for clinical effectiveness research studies, from development to implementation, with a focus on GI cancers. They conduct groundbreaking research, with an eye towards ensuring screening strategies truly reduce cancer burden."

In the U.S., we have centers with a clinical effectiveness focus, but the Oslo group is unique—it is a "one-stop shop" for clinical effectiveness research studies, from development to implementation, with a focus on GI cancers. They conduct groundbreaking research, with an eye towards ensuring screening strategies truly reduce cancer burden. I spent my time there participating in their lab activities, including clinical trial setup for studies focused on surveillance after polyp removal and artificial intelligence in colonoscopy, as well as execution and dissemination of results. I had meetings each day with different team members to learn the





different roles that everyone plays within such a group. The team consists of physician-scientists, coordinators, research nurses, and administrators, and I was able to connect with each of them. This was facilitated by joining their annual retreat, set on a remote island within the Oslofjord, and experiences such as attending one of the team physicians' PhD dissertation.

Systemically, I was able to understand how Norway's universal healthcare system facilitates their research but also gained an understanding of how to conduct studies across different healthcare systems. For example, the group conducts clinical trials across multiple European countries, and learning the logistics of such an endeavor was important as I seek to develop multi-center clinical trials in the U.S. Most of my efforts were spent developing an ongoing collaboration with the team, focused on reducing the burden of gastric cancer within at-risk populations in the U.S. This included meetings to discuss background, my prior research efforts, and development of a larger grant, which I spent time writing and revising with feedback from my new colleagues. This grant is presently under review, and thanks to the opportunity provided to me via the ACG, I am confident that this ongoing collaboration will result in a reduction of GI cancer burden within the U.S.

I was also fortunate to spend time on the outpatient and inpatient gastroenterology units at the University of Oslo. The experience shadowing endoscopists in a different healthcare system was my first exposure to healthcare outside the U.S. and was invaluable to my growth as a physician. Finally, I was able to take in Norway's beauty, exploring Oslo and its abundant and accessible nature. I am so grateful to the ACG for making this international experience possible, and to my new colleagues and friends at the University of Oslo's Clinical Effectiveness Research Group.



Dr. Shria Kumar is Associate Program Director for Gastroenterology Fellowship, Director of Endoscopic Research, and Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine at University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.