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Project Review Board for Serbian Clinical Immunology Fund

Supervisors: Professor Matthew Collin, Dr Venetia Bigley

Newcastle University

Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

Final Report

My name is Andrej Pešić and I am an Internal Medicine resident at the Clinic for Hematology, University Clinical Center of Serbia, and a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade.

This is my final report on the grant kindly provided by the Lilić-Abinun Foundation, for my project titled *Allogeneic Stem Cell Transplantation and Post-Transplant Follow-Up for Adults with Inborn Errors of Immunity: A Framework for Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation in Serbia*. This project was undertaken jointly with my colleague, Dr Jelena Ljubičić, an Internal Medicine resident specializing in Clinical Immunology.

Our visit was focused on developing knowledge and clinical insight in performing allogeneic stem cell transplantation in adult patients with inborn errors of immunity (IEI), as this represents an important unmet clinical need in Serbia. During our stay from 11th May to 5th June, we were appointed as clinical observers at Freeman Hospital (Northern Centre for Cancer Care-NCCC) and Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI).

During the observership, my primary objectives were to gain practical insight into the following aspects of allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplantation:

- Pre-transplant evaluation and selection of candidates for hematopoietic stem cell transplantation
- Preparation and choice of conditioning regimens, serotherapy, and graft-versus-host disease (GvHD) prophylaxis
- Donor selection
- Peri-transplant monitoring and clinical care of transplant recipients
- Short- and long-term follow-up of transplanted patients
- Management of common post-transplant complications, including graft-versus-host disease, infectious complications (particularly viral reactivations), and graft failure

The majority of my clinical observership was conducted under the supervision of Dr Venetia Bigley, MRC Senior Clinical Fellow and Honorary Consultant Hematologist specializing in hematopoietic stem cell transplantation for patients with IEI. Most of my time was spent at Freeman Hospital in both the inpatient and outpatient settings, where I gained valuable experience in the clinical management of these highly complex patients.

Additionally, Dr Bigley kindly enabled us to attend numerous multidisciplinary clinics and meetings, such as the National PID BMT Meeting led by Professor Emma Morris, where IEI transplant candidates across the UK are discussed; a joint clinic with Stephen Jolles, Consultant Clinical Immunologist and Honorary Senior Lecturer at the University Hospital for Wales, where we evaluated both transplant candidates and previously transplanted patients with IEI; and the Pediatric Immunology and Infectious Diseases Grand Round Meeting led by Professor Andrew Gennery, where challenging pediatric patients with IEI are discussed. During our stay, we also regularly attended the histiocytosis clinic led by Professor Matthew Collin, which significantly broadened our understanding of rare histiocytic disorders.

This clinical observership provided me with extremely valuable clinical knowledge and skills in understanding the complex procedure of transplanting an adult patient with IEI. It was a privilege to learn from internationally recognized experts in this field and to establish professional relationships that will facilitate future collaboration.

Most importantly, we identified several key areas that require further development before implementing an adult IEI transplant program in Serbia, including specific donor chimerism monitoring strategies, optimization of serotherapy protocols, and the organization of long-term multidisciplinary follow-up. The knowledge acquired during this observership will serve as a foundation for developing institutional protocols and strengthening collaboration between hematology and clinical immunology teams in Serbia.

I firmly believe that our stay in Newcastle represents an important milestone toward establishing a structured program for allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplantation in adults with inborn errors of immunity in Serbia. Beyond the valuable clinical experience gained, it has enabled the development of international collaborations that will support future clinical practice, protocol development, and research in this field.

I am sincerely grateful to the Lilić-Abinun Foundation for making this opportunity possible.

Sincerely yours,
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