

Dear members of the ECNP,

February 2017

I had the great opportunity to spend the two weeks of my ECNP Research Internship under the supervision of Eric Vermetten, MD, PhD, colonel. The expertise his research group has built up in the field of psychotrauma is impressive! In this report, I did my best to summarize the richness of my experience. A multidisciplinary collaboration across universities and nations seems to contribute to the success formula of this psychotrauma group. I could personally experience the extensiveness of their knowledge by rotating between at least *five different research/clinical settings* during this two-week period. In the next paragraphs, I will highlight the key characteristics of each of these working places.

As a starting point and place to stay I chose the city of Leiden (future internship candidates who are interested in more details about my stay, feel free to contact me). At the *Leiden University Medical Centre (LUMC)*, I got into contact with the clinicians working at the Psychiatry ward. I was astonished by their interest in the research projects underpinning their clinical work. What surprised me even more, was the awareness of the other medical disciplines of the psychological distress not only their patients, but also their colleagues could suffer from. A meeting at the Department of Gynaecology seemed to be the first step in the take-off of a qualitative study targeting doctors who benefited peer support.

Being a medical resident in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, offered me the opportunity for a traineeship. I am very grateful to professor Vermetten (and his patients) that I was allowed to join his consultations in the *Military Rehabilitation Centre (MRC) of Doorn*. Again, I witnessed the strong collaboration between psychiatrists, neurologists, rehabilitation physicians, surgeons and general practitioners. By sharing their knowledge, a multidisciplinary approach in treating veterans with a somatic symptom disorder arose and has proven to be beneficial for this rather therapy-resistant group of patients.

The target population of this internship merely consisted of military personnel. But in *Diemen and Oesgeest*, I came into contact with initiatives established for civilians too. In *Centre '45*, a partner in the *Arq Psychotrauma Expert Group*, for example, refugees are screened and if necessary treated for PTSD conform the state of the art, and even beyond, thanks to research projects like 3MDR (Multi-modular Motion-assisted Memory Desensitization and Reconsolidation) and HITT (Highly Intensive Trauma Therapy). In my opinion (that will hopefully soon be confirmed by positive study results) these are both very promising treatment strategies!

Finally, at the *Central Military Hospital (CMH) and the University Medical Centre (UMC) Utrecht*, I joined a group of very passionate, mainly junior, researchers. All of them are (financially) supported by the Dutch Ministry of Defence to elaborate their own PhD trajectory within the broad domain of psychotrauma in a military population. During the private talks we had, I discovered a huge overlap, not only in the design of our research projects (longitudinal study, stress-related parameters, questionnaire-based, endocrinological measurements, epigenetics,...) , but also in our opinions about research in general (scientific integrity, difficulties to publish negative results, issues to overcome to acquire a tenure track position in academy,...). I hope the foundation for long-lasting contacts and future collaborations has been made!

I would like to conclude this report with two key messages I will take home. First of all, I experienced the great power of sharing knowledge not only with colleagues, but also with patients/study participants. At the end, they are the driving force behind every research success. Secondly, I will try to take over the open, constructive, transparent attitude I discovered in coaching students. I am convinced a less hierarchical mentor-mentee mentality will contribute to the broad education of students/PhD candidates and will better prepare them for a future academic career.

I am very grateful to the ECNP committee for giving me the opportunity to broaden my horizon and deepen my knowledge with this Research Internship!

At the end, I would like to thank all of the research and clinical colleagues I met during this Internship!



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