

Report on “ESO Department-to-Department Visiting Programme” visit

by Loes Rutten-Jacobs

13 June - 17 June 2016 I visited the Institute for Stroke and Dementia (ISD) research in Munich. My main aim of this visit was to get an inside view of the institute and to explore future opportunities for collaboration.

During the week Dr Rainer Malik and Professor Martin Dichgans were my main hosts. They took plenty of time to show me every section of the institute and some of other interesting parts of the campus. Furthermore, they had made a detailed time schedule for me for the week to ensure that I would have the opportunity to have a one-to-one meeting with all the group leaders and senior researchers.

I was very impressed by all I was shown during the tour. The ISD is an exceptional institute as it covers many different research disciplines all centred around stroke and dementia. In one single building there are groups working on biochemistry, cell biology, animal models, genetic epidemiology, classical epidemiology and clinical studies. The building houses a stroke clinic where patients are seen and state-of-the-art research facilities including a large animal lab, wet labs and in the near future MRI. For me it was a great learning experience to see how well the institute was organised. They seemed to have thought about almost every little detail that would make the experiments and data collection more useful now and in the far future.

I extremely enjoyed to meet all the group leaders and many other researchers. Besides many “coffee-talks” I had a one-to-one meeting with 12 researchers. They covered a wide range of disciplines, so I had completely different conversations with each of them, but all were very interesting. There was a shared research interest with almost each of them, which confirmed even more for me that I see my research future in an interdisciplinary stroke research environment whilst performing interdisciplinary stroke research.

With Rainer Malik I had long discussions about genetic epidemiology projects in stroke. Together with Rainer I managed to turn my ideas for genetic studies in lacunar stroke into a concrete analysis plan. Rainer will be collaborating with me on this project. Furthermore, we brainstormed about a possible collaborative epidemiologic study, based on recent stroke genetics results.

Marco During research includes mainly brain MRI studies in relation to cognitive decline in cerebral small vessel disease. In my current research I investigate MRI-subtypes of lacunar stroke and I would be very interested to include in my research more detailed SVD-related MRI measures. Hopefully we can combine some of our research in the near future.

Vera Zietemann is an epidemiologist in the ISD, responsible for the design and running of the prospective cohort study in the institute. We had very interesting conversations about design issues in these studies and identified several areas in which we could benefit from each other's data and skills, which hopefully will lead to future fruitful collaboration.

Martin Dichgans has been a great mentor during this week. We had several insightful discussions on my current and future career path. These conversations helped me a lot with getting a structured overview again of where I want to be in the future and how to get there.

At the end of the week I went home with an amazing impression of the ISD, a lot of ideas to implement in my current research, a lot of ideas for future research, new research contacts and again a clear vision how I want to proceed with my career.

I would like to thank the ESO for giving me this extremely valuable opportunity.