

SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) SCIENTIFIC REPORT

This report is submitted for approval by the STSM applicant to the STSM coordinator

Action number: CA15210

STSM title: Kidney Exchange Program Greece - Italy

STSM start and end date: 02/12/2018 to 08/12/2018

Grantee name: Stathis Tsiakas

PURPOSE OF THE STSM:

The Renal Transplant Unit of the 'Laiko' General Hospital Of Athens in association with the Greek National Transplant Organization has developed a paired kidney donation program since 2017. The purpose of the STSM was to visit the Italian National Transplant Centre and discuss the terms of a common kidney exchange program between Italy and Greece in order to further expand the pool of donor/recipient pairs.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSM:

The Short Term Scientific Mission took place in the Italian National Transplant Centre. Ms Paola Di Ciaccio, Head of Foreign Affairs Division, and Ms Margherita Gentile guided me in great detail through the process of establishing the international crossover kidney exchange program (South Alliance for Transplants) involving Italy, Spain, France and Portugal, and described thoroughly the proceedings of the transplantation performed in July 2018 between Italy and Spain through this program. I was also introduced to Professor Nanni Costa, Director of the Italian Transplant Centre, and discussed the feasibility of including the Greek donor/recipient pairs initially in the Italian national crossover kidney program with the prospect of joining the South Alliance for Transplants in the future.

During the STSM we worked on a draft for a bilateral agreement between Italy and Greece with the purpose of developing a common kidney exchange program in accordance with the Italian national and the above-mentioned international protocols. We reviewed the registry of the Italian and Greek pairs and agreed upon the clinical and immunological data needed, in order to enroll in the program. The data will be uploaded in a secure web-platform based in the Italian National Transplant Center in compliance with the personal data protection law. The causes of inclusion would be blood type incompatibility or positive crossmatch by CDC/flow cytometry with the presence of pre-formed antibodies against donor HLA antigens. The crossover software, used in both the Italian national and the international kidney exchange programmes for identifying possible matches, was demonstrated to me and the prioritization criteria in case of multiple combinations were set. We also discussed the hospital requirements needed in order to participate in the program, the surgical aspects and the transplant procedure, as well as logistic and legal issues.

Moreover, in the course of my STSM I gained valuable knowledge of the Italian transplant system, regarding the coordination and allocation of organs, the solid organ donation activity, the information system and the data collection.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED:

During the STSM a bilateral agreement protocol for a common kidney exchange program between Italy and Greece was drafted, describing the objective of the program, the information to be included in the registry, the participating hospital requirements, the matching algorithm, the timing of the match-runs and the transplant procedure. This protocol will have to be legally approved by the corresponding authorities in both countries in order to proceed with the program.

Furthermore, we compiled a list of tasks to be completed in the next months, such as defining the logistics of the organ transport options, completing the workup of our donor/recipient pairs, draw a mutual consent form for the pairs etc.

In conclusion, the STSM enabled us to discuss the details of a future collaboration between Italy and Greece in the field of paired kidney donation, to proceed further with the project and become better acquainted with each country's transplant system. Above all, it provided an ideal opportunity to meet the people in charge of the program and hopefully build a trusting relationship with each other.