

IHS Short-stay Scholarship reports 2024

Natia Bitsadze, Georgia



Institution: Inselspital, Bern University Hospital, Switzerland

Mentor: Christoph Schankin

January to February 2025

My name is Natia Bitsadze and I come from the small but very beautiful country of Georgia. I work there at the Iv. Bokeria University Hospital and I am in my 3rd year of Residency. My mentor Prof. Dr. med. Zaza Katsarava helped me to get involved in headache medicine. It started in 2023 when I attended the 1st IHS/EHF Headache Research Academy Conference 2023 in Baku, Azerbaijan. After that, my interest in headache grew, but after the IHS short-stay scholarship, I can confidently say that I am in love with headache medicine. The conferences are perfect and really interesting, but the contact with patients where you can apply the treatment of headache and see the result is the most useful knowledge you can get from scholarship.

During my short-term scholarship at Inselspital, University Hospital Bern in Switzerland, I had the privilege of working under the guidance of Prof. Dr. med. Christoph Schankin. His mentorship helped me integrate quickly and actively participate in the clinical work. One moment that left a lasting impression was seeing my first patient at Inselspital. Dr. Schankin taught me that not everything is always as it seems. While examining a patient together with an assistant doctor, we both initially believed that the patient who had a long history of headaches and was being treated for migraines indeed suffered from migraines. However, after consulting with Dr. Schankin, we reconsidered the diagnosis and suspected cluster headache instead. This patient had typical migraine symptoms, but there were several aspects that didn't quite fit the diagnosis.

Anyway it was hard not to think about migraine as a diagnosis. For me this experience was a lesson that we need to evaluate all symptoms and if something does not match together we need to reassess everything again from the beginning. Additionally, it's important to seek a second opinion whether from someone with more experience or simply someone who can offer a different perspective.

Every day, I learned that providing proper treatment is not the only important aspect of patient care, it is equally important to ask patients about their wishes and expectations from their doctor. I was surprised to see how essential it is to involve patients in treatment decisions and how great this collaboration can impact on the patient.

I also realized that managing headaches is not always simple. Finding the right medication often requires trial and error, which can be a stressful process for patients who are suffering from persistent pain.

During my scholarship, I had the opportunity to see some non-pharmacological devices for migraine treatment, such as Cefaly and Ozilia. Because I had a desire to understand the patient experience, I even tried Ozilia myself to see how it felt. At this headache center, I was able to attend some educational sessions, case reviews, x-ray reports, etc. This scholarship allowed me to explore all possible treatment options for headaches while learning from some of the best headache experts. The most rewarding experience was witnessing patients become headache-free after treatment.

One important thing I would like to mention is the situation in low-income countries, such as my country Georgia. I have seen many treatment methods in Switzerland that are not available in all countries. The way Georgian patients are treated for headaches makes me really sad. I think every patient deserves to be in the same condition and have the same treatment options. I hope that I can help my country and give patients the opportunity to fully benefit from headache treatment.

I have only been back in Georgia for two weeks, and a few days ago I had a 22-year-old patient who came to the hospital with suspected epilepsy and wanted to have an EEG. When I started asking some questions I was practicing in Switzerland, I realized that all the criteria of migraine were met. It's not easy to describe the feeling I had during this time. Everything I saw and learned in Inselspital was already helpful for a patient who has been suffering from chronic migraine for 7 years.

I also want to start my own research to help as many patients as possible. In Georgia, we really need headache specialists and increased awareness of headaches.



Finally I am in Switzerland, feeling happy and excited. It's the first time I am in a department where everything is oriented on headache patients.



With Prof. Franz Riederer, he always took the time to explain everything to me in detail after every patient consultation. He also explained and showed me the Botox procedure and the occipital nerve block.



Morning training for assistant doctors.



With my nice and friendly nurse Sandra Lorieri. She explained to me all the procedures they were doing with headache patients. She always had time for me and planned my day so well that I couldn't miss any interesting procedures or patients.





Headache team. It was very lovely dinner organised from my mentor Prof. Dr. med. Christoph Schankin. I am very thankful that he gave me chance to be part of this great team.

Marlon Xavier Cantillo Martinez, Colombia



Institution: Clínica Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, Spain

Mentor: Pablo Irimia

March to April 2025

In Colombia, there is a adage: “Only those who live it, truly enjoy it.” Reading about the results of studies on new targeted treatments for migraine is not the same as prescribing them to a patient, hearing firsthand how these treatments affect their condition and improve the course of the disease. During the eight weeks I spent at the Headache Unit of the Clínica Universidad de Navarra in Pamplona (Spain), under the supervision of Dr. Pablo Irimia, I was able to broaden my knowledge of headache disorders and their specialized management. More importantly, the experience transformed my perception of the disease and its treatments, influencing multiple dimensions of my training as a neurologist:

Clinical practice

In addition to my time at the Headache Unit of the Clínica Universidad de Navarra, I visited the Headache Units of Vall d’Hebron Hospital and Sant Pau Hospital in Barcelona. This allowed me to understand that a headache unit is far more than a monographic consultation. It is a team-based approach designed to restructure healthcare institutions around ambitious therapeutic goals. This includes conducting detailed medical histories, making optimal use of diagnostic imaging, incorporating evaluations from complementary services when indicated, offering evidence-based treatments, and ensuring proper follow-up. In this way, we can improve the quality of care for patients with headache disorders, who often seek not only medication but also someone who listens to and understands them.

Research

I took part in research meetings within the Neurology Department, helping to refine research protocols. I am the lead author of a narrative review on vestibular migraine developed in collaboration with the Department of Otorhinolaryngology, which is currently under final revision for publication. I am also participating in a systematic review on headache and artificial intelligence in collaboration with neurologists from other institutions in Spain. These research projects aim to contribute to the ongoing generation of knowledge in the field of headache medicine.

Teaching

I attended neurology classes taught by Dr. Pablo Irimia at the University of Navarra and participated in a seminar on communication with neurological patients. These experiences have deepened my understanding of medical education, particularly the importance of inspiring students to become better doctors and neurologists.

Organizational experience

I participated in academic meetings organized by the Headache Study Group of the Spanish Society of Neurology, including CefaBox and Mastercef. These meetings provided a valuable forum to discuss scientific and therapeutic issues related to headache in an atmosphere of collegiality, collaboration, and mutual support among neurologists from across Spain.

Social awareness

I came to understand that the most effective way to address a public health issue such as migraine is through collaboration across all levels of society. This includes patients, families, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the pharmaceutical industry.

This training stay not only allowed me to deepen my expertise in headache disorders, gain the foundation for organizing a headache unit, and enhance my research activities—all of which will contribute to my growth as a neurologist—but also gave me a global perspective on headache care. It reaffirmed that the management of this condition must go beyond the neurologist's office. It is about teamwork. I return to my hospital with the conviction that, by working together, we can not only relieve pain but also improve our patients' quality of life.



Beginning of training stay



Visit to the Headache Unit at Vall d'Hebron Hospital

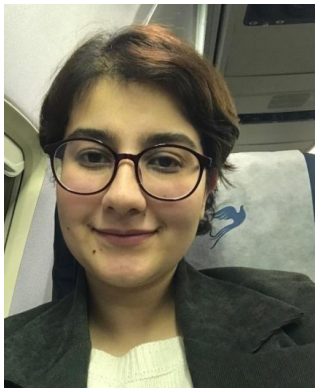


Visit to the Headache Unit at Sant Pau Hospital Participation in the academic meeting “Mastercef



With Dr Pablo Irimia - Grateful upon completing the training stay

Haniyeh Fathi, Iran



Institution: Gazi University, Department of Neurology & Algology, NÖROM, Neuropsychiatry Centre, Ankara, Türkiye

Mentor: Hayrunnisa Bolay

January to March 2025

It was a true privilege to be selected as a recipient of the IHS Short-Stay Scholarship 2024. As a recently graduated medical doctor with a strong interest in headache medicine and neuroscience, this opportunity allowed me to engage in meaningful clinical practice and research at Gazi University and the NÖROM Research Center in Ankara, Turkey.

I vividly recall the day I received the acceptance email from the International Headache Society. It remains one of the most joyful and affirming moments of my life. I felt one step closer to contributing meaningfully to the field I deeply care about.

Initially, I had been scheduled to complete the program at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust and Wolfson CARD, King's College London, under the mentorship of Dr. Anna Andreou. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, plans had to change. With the kind support and thoughtful guidance of Carol Taylor, I was redirected to Ankara to carry out the program under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Hayrunnisa Bolay Belen. Although London had been a long-standing aspiration, I embraced this new direction with an open heart, trusting that it would offer its own unique rewards—and indeed, it did. I arrived in Ankara on January 1, 2025, filled with anticipation. Language was an initial barrier, as I had expected English to be more widely spoken. However, this challenge inspired me to improve my Turkish, and day by day, I became more comfortable interacting with patients and colleagues.

From the very first day at Gazi Hospital, I was warmly welcomed. Meeting Prof. Bolay and her team, including Dr. Doga Vuralli, who kindly mentored me throughout the program, gave me a strong sense of belonging and purpose. I am especially grateful for Dr. Vuralli's guidance and encouragement.

The main objectives of my scholarship period were:

- to gain firsthand experience in clinical headache and pain medicine
- to deepen my knowledge of headache pathophysiology and neuroscience
- to engage in translational research and observe ongoing investigations
- to develop academic and professional skills for future contributions in headache care

Clinical Training

I regularly attended outpatient clinics for headache and algology every Monday and Thursday. These sessions provided valuable exposure to complex cases and multidisciplinary approaches to chronic pain and headache management.

Departmental Rotations

On other days of the week, I rotated through clinics specializing in MS, cerebrovascular disorders, movement disorders, and dementia. I also participated in inpatient rounds and resident teaching sessions, gaining broader clinical experience in neurology.

Research Exposure at NOROM

Despite the limited duration, I was introduced to ongoing research at the NOROM center. These included experimental models on migraine pathophysiology, cortical spreading depression, and pain perception modulation. I was also invited to weekly Friday research meetings, where I observed how research strategy and direction are thoughtfully discussed—an invaluable learning experience.

Academic Engagement

I participated in weekly seminars, journal clubs, and case discussions. The Wednesday morning sessions focused on headache medicine were particularly inspiring. I was honored to present three topics during these meetings:

- A review article titled Migraine in Men
- A summary of Chapter 1 from Headache and Facial Pain by Prof. Sait Ashina
- A meta-analysis on Probiotics and Brain Health

These presentations helped me develop my communication and scientific interpretation skills.

Achievements and Impact

This program significantly enhanced my:

- Clinical reasoning in headache and chronic pain management
- Understanding of neurobiology and translational research
- Scientific presentation and critical reading abilities
- Cross-cultural communication skills in a multidisciplinary clinical setting

Future Plans

This experience reaffirmed my passion for neurology and my desire to specialize in headache medicine. I am committed to using the skills I have gained to improve patient care in my home country. I also hope to engage in international collaborative research and contribute to global efforts in advancing headache care.

Acknowledgements

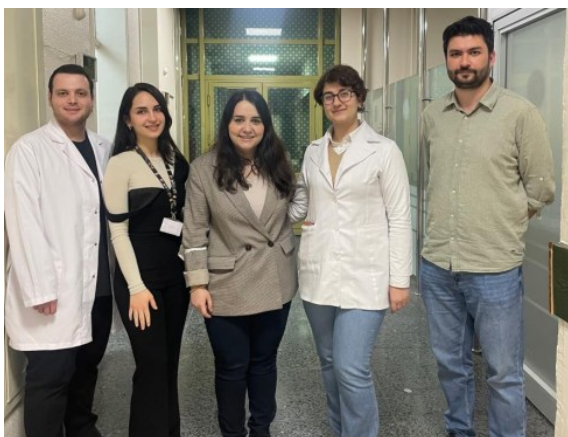
I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the International Headache Society (IHS) for granting me this incredible opportunity. A special thanks to Carol, whose kindness and support made it possible for me to continue my scholarship journey in Ankara despite unexpected challenges.

My heartfelt appreciation also goes to Prof. Dr. Hayrunnisa Bolay Belen and Dr. Doga Vuralli for their generous mentorship, continuous encouragement, and for welcoming me into the clinical and research community at Gazi University and the NOROM Research Center.

I am also sincerely thankful to Dr. Somayyeh Baghizadeh, my professor in Iran, whose early guidance and encouragement sparked my passion for headache medicine and helped me find this bright path. This experience has been one of the most valuable and transformative periods of my professional life, and I will always carry it with gratitude and hope.



Gazi University Hospital



Headache clinic team - the neurology residents and Dr. Doga became wonderful friends



With Dr. Dilara Onan



Migraine research team



EEG and TMS labs





A full photo gallery can be found [here](#).

Medina Fedlu Mohammed, Ethiopia



Institution: Lieden University Medical Centre, Netherlands

Mentor: Gisela Terwindt

June to July 2025

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the International Headache Society (IHS) for providing me this incredible opportunity to meet with leading experts in a world-class setting dedicated to headache care.

My experience at Leiden University Medical Center was highly valuable, particularly in deepening my understanding and clinical approach to headache disorders. I had the opportunity to engage with experts in the field, explore advanced diagnostic and management strategies, and participate in multidisciplinary discussions that enriched my perspective. This exposure has significantly enhanced my ability to provide specialized care for patients with headache disorders and will contribute meaningfully to my teaching and advocacy efforts in Ethiopia.

This observer ship has not only enriched my clinical knowledge but also strengthened my commitment to advancing headache care in my home setting. I am committed to implementing the lessons learned and carrying forward the high standards of care and professionalism. Furthermore, I look forward to fostering continued collaboration with the experts at LUMC to maximize the impact of this valuable experience.





Ayşenur Şahin Mısır, Türkiye



Institution: Charité Universitätsmedizin Headache Center, Berlin, Germany

Mentor: Bianca Raffaelli

January 2025

As part of the IHS Short-Stay Scholarship 2024, I had the privilege of being at the Charité Universitätsmedizin Headache Center from January 6 to 31, 2025. From the very first day, Dr. med. Bianca Raffaelli and her exceptional team welcomed me warmly, making me feel like a valued member of their highly collaborative and supportive environment. Their kindness and willingness to share their knowledge created an enriching learning experience, making my time at Charité truly unforgettable.

During my four-week stay, I spent my mornings in the headache outpatient clinics, where I had the opportunity to observe and engage in the comprehensive assessment of both newly referred and follow-up patients. I closely followed the diagnostic approach and treatment strategies, gaining valuable insights into both acute and preventive treatment options, including pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions. Witnessing firsthand how this distinguished center manages patients with chronic headaches, medication overuse headaches, and refractory migraine cases significantly expanded my clinical perspective.

I also had the opportunity to learn about the structured follow-up protocols (including detailed headache diaries and their documentation), which play a key role in tracking disease progression and treatment effectiveness. Additionally, this experience exposed me to several pharmacological treatments that are not yet available in Turkey, including monoclonal antibodies such as erenumab and fremanezumab, as well as different triptans (and also various treatments that are still in the experimental stage, such as MAA lidocaine infusion). Observing their real-world clinical application, efficacy, and patient response deepened my understanding of the latest advancements in migraine treatment.

In the afternoons, I was integrated into the research team, where I contributed to the retrospective analysis of migraine patient data. This hands-on experience allowed me to enhance my understanding of clinical research methodologies, data collection processes, and the nuances of analyzing large-scale patient datasets.

Additionally, every Tuesday morning, I participated in multidisciplinary case discussions, where complex and challenging cases were reviewed in detail. Complementing these discussions, one of the highlights of my stay was the weekly research meetings every Thursday, where I gained invaluable insights into research design, hypothesis formulation, data interpretation, and manuscript preparation. Engaging with highly experienced researchers and being part of stimulating academic

discussions strengthened my ability to critically analyze scientific literature and develop research ideas for future projects.

Beyond my clinical and academic experiences, I also had the privilege of learn about the "Tagesklinik" program, a highly structured and multidisciplinary one-week intensive program designed for patients with episodic and chronic migraine. This unique program, led by neurologists, physiotherapists, and pain specialists, focuses on educating patients about their condition and equipping them with effective self-management strategies. The program combines medications with non-medical treatments, such as relaxation techniques, identifying triggers, lifestyle modifications, and physiotherapy interventions. Observing this program firsthand was truly enlightening, as it emphasized the importance of a holistic, patient-centered approach to headache management, which goes far beyond medication alone.

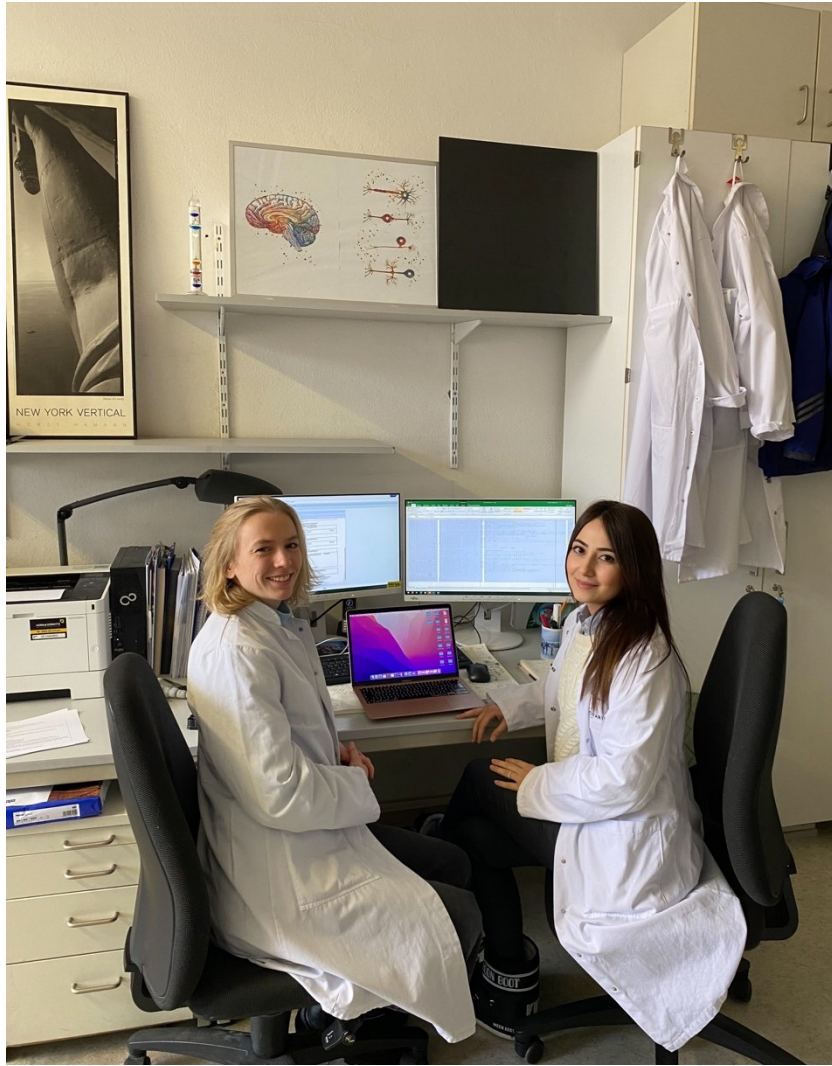
Reflecting on my time at Charité, I am deeply grateful for this extraordinary experience. These four weeks have greatly expanded my clinical and research skills in headache medicine. Learning from leading experts in the field has been inspiring, and the knowledge I gained will undoubtedly contribute to headache management in my clinic and country, as well as shape future collaborations.

This experience has significantly enriched my clinical and research skills in headache medicine. I have identified several key areas where I can integrate what I have learned into my clinical practice:

- Headache Diaries: Although we already use headache diaries to track our patients, I realized that our current format could be more detailed and user-friendly. To address this, I updated our headache diary and presented the revised version to my department head. Furthermore, I discussed the possibility of implementing this improved format on a national level with our headache society in Turkey. Additionally, I recognized the necessity of systematically documenting headache diaries in patient records to ensure better follow-up and treatment adjustments.
- Patient Information on Treatments: I noticed that due to limited examination time, we often struggle to provide adequate information to chronic headache patients about new treatment options. The brochures and medication dosage charts used at Charité served as inspiration for me to develop similar educational materials for preventive treatments. I believe that providing such resources will enhance patients' understanding of their treatment options and improve their trust in the prescribed therapies.
- Non-Medical Treatments: While we are aware of the importance of non-medical treatments, particularly for patients suffering from migraine and tension-type headaches, time constraints in clinical practice often prevent us from fully addressing them. Although establishing a comprehensive program like the "Tagesklinik" is not currently feasible for us, I realized that, as a short-term goal, we should at least direct our patients to reliable resources where they can learn more about non-medical treatment strategies.
- Medications Not Available in Turkey: Observing the different triptans used at Charité and their varying effects on patients was an eye-opening experience. This exposure provided me with a deeper understanding of how different formulations can be tailored to individual patient needs, reinforcing the importance of having access to a broader range of treatment options. I aim to share this knowledge with my colleagues and advocate for the availability of these medications in Turkey.
- Future Collaborations: On the research side, actively participating in data analysis and academic discussions has strengthened my ability to critically evaluate scientific literature and develop research projects. The time I spent at Charité and the connections I established with Dr. med. Bianca Raffaelli and her team have been invaluable. I sincerely hope that this experience will

serve as a foundation for future collaborations, paving the way for multi-center studies that bring together expertise from different institutions.





Vinh Khang Nguyen, Vietnam



Institution: Hull Royal Infirmary, UK

Mentor: Fayyaz Ahmed

October to November 2025

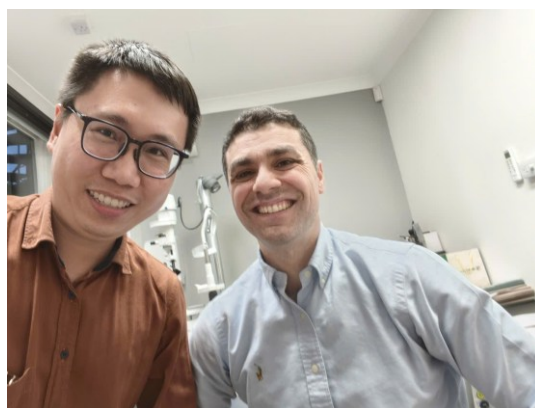
During my International Headache Society short-stay fellowship under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Fayyaz Ahmed, I have had the chance to observe headache clinics with Dr Modar Khalil (Monday evening in Spire Hull Private GP Surgery clinic; Tuesday morning & afternoon in Spire Hesslewood Clinic), Dr Sophie Dorsey (Wednesday afternoon in Spire Hesslewood Clinic), and Prof. Fayyaz Ahmed (Wednesday morning; Thursday morning & afternoon in Spire Hesslewood Clinic). On full clinic days, I typically observed 60–80 patients, mainly with migraine and other primary headache disorders. I have also had the chance to attend the weekly neurology meeting at Hull Royal Infirmary on Friday morning, where I have learned through the discussion of other common neurological diagnoses and treatments.



With Prof. Fayyaz Ahmed at Spire Hesslewood Clinic



With Dr. Sophie Dorsey during the headache clinic sessions



With Dr. Modar Khalil at Spire Hull Private GP Surgery Clinic

I learned to systematically use headache diaries and patient-reported outcomes (HIT-6) to assess and optimise therapy across standard oral preventives, OnabotulinumtoxinA, and newer options, including anti-CGRP monoclonal antibodies and gepants. Importantly, I gained practical experience in evaluating treatment responses and deciding when to escalate or switch therapy by monitoring monthly migraine days and disability scores through these tools. I also observed the selection and adjustment of acute treatments for migraine, understanding how individual response and tolerability guide the choice of specific medications.

I have observed the application of OnabotulinumtoxinA injections (PREEMPT paradigm) and greater occipital nerve blocks, including patient selection, injection mapping, dosing, and follow-up.

I also observed how a specialised headache clinic is organised, covering triage, workflow, documentation, safety monitoring, and systematic follow-up. This offers a practical model I intend to adapt to establish a dedicated headache clinic in Vietnam.

This fellowship has enhanced my clinical skills and deepened my understanding of headache medicine and will directly contribute to improving headache care in Vietnam.

I observed how a team of doctors and specialist nurses organize work to see many patients in tandem for data collection and administration of treatment. A typical clinic is set for 10 minutes for the doctor to collect data, which is followed by the nurse administering the treatment with either a nerve block or the administration of Botox. I also observed how telephone clinics are set to review patients on long-term CGRP MAB and how the decision to continue, break, or stop those drugs is made.



With Ms. Deby Rowbottom and Ms. Karen Wasi (Karen Anya Wasikowski) at Spire Hesslewood Clinic.

Daphne Atieno, Kenya



Institution: Dent Neurologic Institute, Buffalo, NY, USA

Mentor: Laszlo Mechtler

January to February 2025

I am Daphne Atieno, a Registered Clinical Officer working at Mbita Sub County Hospital, Homabay, Kenya. Through the support of the International Headache Society's Short- Stay Scholarship, I had the privilege of undertaking an academic and clinical attachment at Dent Neurologic Institute in Buffalo, New York, from 15 January 2025 to 28 February 2025. The primary objective of this program was to enhance my knowledge and clinical expertise in headache management, with a focus on improving patient care and outcomes in my home institution.

Objectives

- To gain a comprehensive understanding of headache disorders, including migraine headaches, tension type headaches, cluster headaches, new daily persistent headaches and other primary and secondary headaches conditions
- To observe and participate in advanced diagnostic and treatment approaches used at Dent Neurologic Institute.
- To engage with leading neurologists, physicians and headache specialists to learn best practice in patient care.
- To explore emerging research and innovations in headache management.
- To understand the impact of lifestyle diseases and mental health disorders on headache management

Activities and Experiences

During my time at Dent Neurologic Institute, I actively participated in:

- Clinical Observations: Shadowed neurologists, Physicians, Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners specializing in headache medicine. I also conducted patient history-taking and physical examinations, presenting case findings for discussion and learning about individualized treatment plans.
- Diagnostic Techniques: Gained insight into neuroimaging interpretation, particularly MRI findings in migraine and idiopathic intracranial hypertension, as well as the role of EEG in headache assessment.
- Treatment Approaches: Observed and learned about procedures such as Botox injections for chronic migraines, Nerve blocks, Trigger point injections, Sphenopalatine ganglion (SPG) block and Infusion therapies.
- Multidisciplinary Collaboration: Engaged with Obesity medicine specialist and psychologist to understand the holistic approach to headache care.
- Academic Engagement: Attended lectures, case discussions and research presentations on the latest advancements in headache medicine.

Achievements and Outcomes

My short stay at Dent Neurologic Institute, guided by Dr. Laszlo Metchler and his colleagues allowed me to:

- Deepen my understanding of headache pathophysiology, diagnosis, various headache types and management strategies.
- Enhance my clinical decision-making and critical thinking in patient care
- Gain practical exposure to advanced headache management techniques.
- Establish professional connections with experts in neurology and headache medicine.
- Identify potential areas for future research collaboration in headache disorders.

Challenges and Lesson Learned

- Challenges: Adapting to a new clinical environment and keeping pace with the high standards of a specialized neurology institute.
- Approach to overcoming Challenges: Engaged actively in discussions, sought mentorship, and reviewed relevant literature to reinforce learning.
- Key Lessons: The experience highlighted the importance of a multidisciplinary, patient-centered approach and the critical role of detailed history - taking in headache management.

Conclusions and Acknowledgments

My time at Dent Neurologic Institute was an invaluable experience that enhanced my clinical skills and deepened my understanding of headache medicine. I am immensely grateful to the International Headache Society, the faculty and staff at Dent Neurologic Institute, and my mentors for the guidance and support. This experience has reinforced my commitment to improving headache care in Kenya and has inspired me to promote continued medical education (CME) on headache management among clinicians in my home institution to bridge the knowledge gap in headache management.



With Dr. Metchler studying MRI findings on a headache patient and presenting a headache case

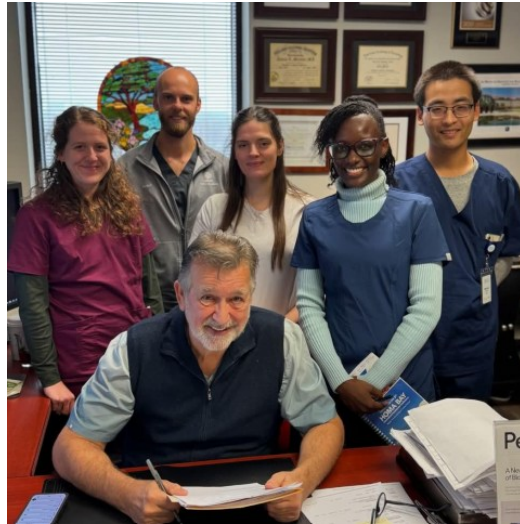


Valentine's Day putting a smile on patients faces

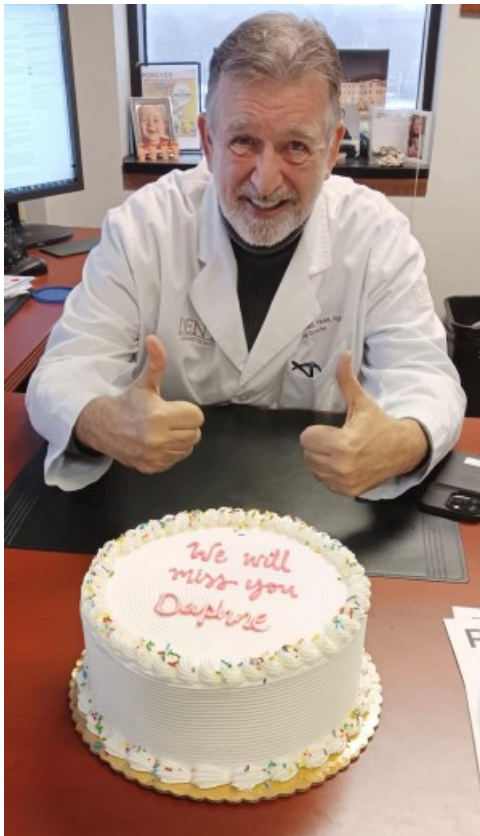




With the team



With residents and young student doctors during rotations



My farewell

Arman F Oronce, Philippines



Institution: Thomas Jefferson University Headache Center, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Mentor: William B Young

July to August 2025

Objectives and Expectations

At the start of the scholarship, my goals were threefold:

- Deepen clinical expertise in headache disorders—particularly complex migraine and refractory headache syndromes—within a leading academic institution.
- Observe multidisciplinary care, including neurologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, fellows, and nurses in both inpatient infusion and outpatient settings.
- Engage with current research and evidence-based therapies, gaining exposure to innovative treatments and trial protocols.

Academic and Clinical Highlights

Inpatient Care

1. Clinical Rounds

I observed firsthand the multidisciplinary approach to complex headache management. The inpatient infusion protocol—often spanning 3–5 days—varied per patient: some received DHE, others lidocaine or ketamine, or at times a combination of two of those drugs, tailored according to clinical response.

During my observership/rounds with Dr Lauritsen at the Methodist Hospital, I was exposed to the unique blend of clinical precision, patient-centered care and multi-disciplinary approach that expanded my perspective beyond traditional neurology training. I was particularly impressed with the state of the art facility design and physical infrastructure of the headache unit from the careful planning of lighting and sound absorption to the subtle effort in minimizing odor and other headache triggering factors within the center.

Dr. Lauritsen emphasized protocol-based evaluation, beginning each encounter with a detailed review of the patient's headache diary, triggers, and prior therapeutic responses. He demonstrated the value of ICHD-3 diagnostic clarity, carefully differentiating migraine with aura from secondary causes, and reinforcing the importance of avoiding diagnostic drift.

My time with Dr William Young was equally valuable. I observed how he integrated evidence-based acute and preventive regimens, tailoring treatment sequences to patient comorbidities and preferences. During this time, I also met with some of the Headache Fellows, Dr Brendan Parr and Dr Kelly Nicol who have been more than welcoming of my queries and suggestions.

2. Interventional & Infusion Approaches

I was introduced to the unit's infusion suite operations, where patients with status migrainosus or medication-refractory headaches received therapies such as IV magnesium, dihydroergotamine (DHE), and antiemetic adjuncts.

Dr. William Young highlighted practical considerations such as drug selection based on availability, patient tolerance, and safety monitoring, which resonated with the resource-sensitive Philippine setting.

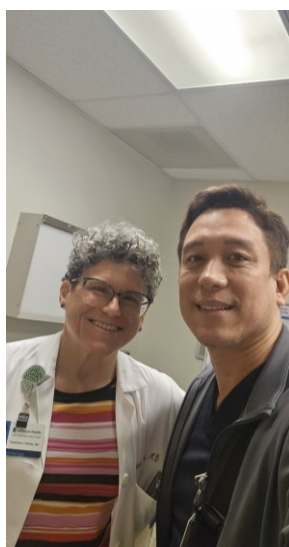
I also observed and assisted in the use of procedural interventions—occipital nerve blocks, trigger point injections, and Botulinum toxin-A for chronic migraine—emphasizing careful technique and patient counseling.



Outpatient and Fellow Engagement

In ambulatory clinics, I shadowed fellows and attending neurologists like Dr William Young, Dr Stephanie Nahas, Dr Michael Marmura and Dr Scott Yuan. I was able to observe and assist in procedures like botulinum toxin and trigger point injections and nerve blocks. My time with Dr Scott Yuan was especially fruitful – learning about secondary headaches particularly low pressure causes of headache and possible CSF leaks, a diagnosis almost impossible to clinch by general neurologists.

It was very striking how each of them really took their time to explain to the patients the plans and expectations from the treatment, making them partners in their management.

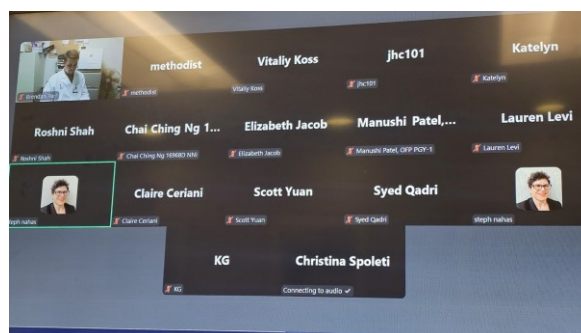


Lectures and conferences

I was fortunate to be able to attend several lectures and conferences and review trials during the classic Journal Club conducted by Dr Young with the fellows. This complemented Jefferson's reputation as a teaching and research hub in headache medicine.

o Conferences attended:

- Migraine Preventives – Dr Stephanie Nahas
- Botulinum Toxin, the PREEMPT protocol
- Mystery Headache (Identifying CSF leaks) – Dr Scott Yuan
- Friday Team Conference
- Tuesdays Classic Journal Club – Dr William Young



Personal and Professional Growth

Emotional Insight: Witnessing the compassionate care offered to patients—particularly those who'd endured years of untreated pain—deepened my empathy and commitment to patient-centered communication. Of note, in one of our rounds with Dr Young during my first week, a patient's claim of headache freedom changed my attitude and perspective towards migraine patients.

Professional Development: Observing interdisciplinary teamwork, from infusion nurses to research staff, enriched my understanding of coordinated headache care. The nursing staff were all helpful especially Aimee Masino who even took time to explain the processes involved from admission and discharge.

Inspirational Mentorship: Meeting seasoned clinicians like Dr. William Young—with decades of migraine research, guideline leadership, and fellowship training experience—was profoundly motivating.

Challenges Encountered

Logistics and Flow: The hospital's electronic medical recording sometimes felt overwhelming for me although the importance of proper documentation was underscored upon me.

Patient Variability: Inpatient infusion outcomes were mixed. Some patients saw meaningful reductions in headache frequency, while others experienced only temporary relief—or notable side effects.

Patient Representation: More than 90% of the patients have some concomitant psychiatric comorbidities, either as a result of their chronic headache or a pre-existing disorder. I also only rarely saw patients of Asian decent, particularly from my region, southeast asia, rendering applicability of my observership partially met. This possibly also hints at cultural or race differences in the health seeking behavior of most asians or a reflection of referral bias since Jefferson Headache Center is the largest in the US.

The Philippine Context/Applicability

The efficiency of structured pathways—from triage to infusion to discharge planning—demonstrated how a headache unit can be both high-volume and patient-centered. The infusion protocols and procedure-based interventions I observed are directly adaptable to private tertiary centers such as Asian Hospital and Medical Center, where I practice, and can even be extended to smaller centers outside Manila where access to newer biologics remains limited. While structures, facilities, and physical plants are relatively easy to establish, the greater challenge lies in dismantling the stigma surrounding headache and reshaping the attitudes of both physicians and patients toward this condition

Conclusion

Completing the short-stay scholarship at Jefferson's Headache Center was transformative. It deepened both my clinical knowledge and humanistic understanding of chronic headache care. I leave inspired to continue bridging research, education, and empathetic patient care in the evolving field of headache medicine. More importantly than my learnings, was actually unlearning my old perspective on migraine stigma. It has been a personal and professional transformation. It means moving from disregarding to validating, from seeing migraine as "just a headache" to embracing it as a chronic brain disease that deserve similar approach in patient management and to deal with this subset of patients with empathy, structured care, and advocacy. My gratitude to the International Headache Society for the privilege of the scholarship grant and to the Jefferson Headache Center for graciously hosting me.

Erica Tavares, Brazil



Institution: Hospital da Luz, Lisbon, Portugal

Mentor: Raquel Gil-Gouveia

April to May 2025

After being awarded one of the short-stay scholarships by the International Headache Society (IHS), I completed my observational internship at the Hospital da Luz, in Lisbon, from April 16 to May 16, 2025, under the supervision of Dra. Raquel Gil-Gouveia, an international reference in the field of headache medicine.

I had the opportunity to accompany not only Dr. Raquel, but also four other doctors from the team: Dra. Elsa Parreira, Dra. Inês Marques and Dr. Henrique Delgado, all highly skilled and generous in sharing their clinical experience and expertise. I also participated in the weekly inpatient case discussion meetings, which offered deep and multidisciplinary insights into complex neurological cases.

One particularly interesting aspect of this experience was the opportunity to observe a distinct clinical reality, where a large number of patients are being treated with migraine-specific therapies, such as anti-CGRP monoclonal antibodies, which are already well established in Portugal. And also gepants, whose use has increased since early 2025—providing valuable insight into their implementation in clinical practice. This gave me experience with their long-term effectiveness and tolerability in a real-world setting. Atogepant's fast and high preventive efficacy has been remarkable, supporting its use as a first-line option. It was also particularly impressive to me, given that gepants are still unavailable in Brazil.

The complexity of the cases followed and the team's expertise in combining multiple preventive therapies—including botulinum toxin, monoclonal antibodies, and classic oral drugs, and the rich case discussions, especially with Dra. Raquel and Dra. Elsa—provided valuable insights that enhanced my accuracy in managing resistant and refractory migraine, as well as in selecting the most suitable, evidence-based preventive treatment for each patient.

Another distinguishing feature of the experience was the contact with the multiple ongoing clinical trials in the service, something unprecedented in my practice until then. The structure, organisation, and integration of the team around the clinical studies were really inspiring.

Another point of great value was the opportunity to participate in the Annual Meeting of the Portuguese Headache Society, held during the internship period. On that occasion, I presented a clinical case in the interactive discussion session, about the challenges in diagnosing and treating adolescents with migraine with brainstem aura and transient amaurosis.

This experience has had a meaningful impact on the quality of care I provide to patients—both in my private practice and within the Brazilian public health system (SUS), where I have been working as a board-certified neurologist at the municipal outpatient clinic. In my city, Jaraguá do Sul, Brazil, access to headache specialized care has historically been limited. As the only headache specialist in the city, this international training has not only strengthened my role as a regional reference in the field, but more importantly, it has enabled me to bring updated, evidence-based strategies to underserved populations. My goal is to establish a specialized headache service in the public system.

I will always be immensely grateful to the International Headache Society (IHS) for providing this invaluable and transformative opportunity for my training in the field of headache medicine. In particular, I express my sincere gratitude to Carol Taylor for her kindness, availability, and support throughout the program.



