

## Department to Department Programme in Leiden

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My experience as a participant in the visiting programme in Leiden was a remarkable journey of professional growth, cultural discovery, and personal enrichment. This opportunity allowed me to immerse myself in an intellectually stimulating environment and explore cutting-edge advancements in my specific field of interest—cerebral amyloid angiopathy (CAA).

As a medical doctor at the Neurological Institute Carlo Besta in Milan, I specialize in cerebrovascular diseases and have a particular research focus on CAA. This visiting programme in Leiden was a perfect fit for my interests, as the Neurology Department there is a center of excellence in the diagnosis and treatment of patients affected by CAA. The expertise of the team, combined with their use of advanced diagnostic and therapeutic approaches, provided me with unparalleled insights into the management of this complex condition. During my time in Leiden, I had the opportunity to observe clinical workflows, including innovative imaging and biomarker techniques used in the diagnosis of CAA. Witnessing their multidisciplinary approach to patient care reinforced the importance of integrating research advancements into clinical practice. This experience not only deepened my understanding of the disease but also gave me practical tools and ideas to bring back to my institution, enhancing the care we provide to patients with CAA.

From the very beginning, I was welcomed with genuine warmth by everyone I encountered. The team created a nurturing and supportive atmosphere, where constructive feedback replaced criticism, fostering an environment that encouraged growth and learning. This inclusive and positive mindset made me feel not only at home but also deeply appreciated for my contributions.

Under the guidance of Ellis van Etten, I experienced a model of intellectual generosity and mentorship that will remember. Ellis is not only an indefatigable clinician and passionate researcher but also a profoundly empathetic individual. Her boundless humanity, particularly toward elderly patients, was inspiring and served as a reminder of the importance of compassion in scientific and clinical work. We also discovered that we had many extra-work passions in common and she gave me many tips on how to appreciate the beautiful Netherlands even more.

The research team in Leiden was a mosaic of diversity, bringing together individuals from various academic backgrounds, including psychology, biology, physics, engineering, and neuroscience. This interdisciplinary approach created a vibrant environment where collaboration flourished. The team's youthfulness further added a unique dynamic, filling the workspace with energy, creativity, and enthusiasm. The main standout

features of all the research activities were the meticulous planning and organization of everything, the inclusive and respectful approach through discussions and debates, the space equality given to all participants. All these elements create an environment where ideas could flourish freely and collaboratively.



I had the pleasure of working with an extraordinary group of people who each brought their unique qualities to the team. Sanne's meticulous preparation, tenacity and motivation, Ivana's contagious enthusiasm, Ximaine's exceptional (*impressive!*) professionalism, Danielle's clarity and kindness, Manon's gentleness and helpfulness, Lydiane's sharp reasoning skills (*was able to make me understand physics, even though I never understood physics!*), Rolf's humor and brilliant insights, and Emma's impressive expertise. Their collective spirit was both motivating and unforgettable. (*I had to reduce the number of mentions because I would not have enough space...*).

During my visit, I also had the opportunity to spend time with Professor Marcel Verbeek's group at the Radboudumc Hospital. This center of excellence for the analysis of neuro biomarkers provided an exceptional platform for discussions and brainstorming. Our exchange of ideas sparked numerous research possibilities, making this visit one of the highlights of my programme.

Beyond the professional aspects, my weekends were filled with explorations of the Netherlands. I visited its charming cities, discovering enchanting landscapes and cultural treasures that left a lasting impression. Living in a delightful little house near a public park, I often enjoyed cycling through the picturesque surroundings. Among the many delightful experiences, I discovered a simple culinary treasure: chocolate-covered gallette cookies. They became my daily indulgence and will forever remind me of my time in the Netherlands.

In conclusion, my visiting programme in Leiden was a perfect blend of professional development, scientific exploration, and cultural discovery. The expertise of the Neurology Department, the warmth of the people, and the inspiring mentorship of Ellis van Etten made this experience unforgettable. I return to Milan with new knowledge, innovative ideas, and cherished memories, eager to apply what I have learned to advance care and research for patients with cerebral amyloid angiopathy.

