



EPA GAINING EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME REPORT

On the observership at the **Academic Hospital of Montpellier, France**

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By **Selin Tanyeri Kayahan**

Joining European Psychiatric Association's Gaining Experience Programme in the **Academic Hospital of Montpellier in France** was such an enriching and motivating experience. I had the opportunity to spend two months at the **Department of Emergency Psychiatry and Post-Acute Care**, directed by **Prof. Philippe Courtet**. My supervisor and contact person, **Dr. Aiste Lengvenyte**, warmly welcomed and guided me not only on their outstanding clinical and research activities, but also to ensure that I had a convenient stay in the city of Montpellier. My placement had a well-balanced focus on **both clinical and research activities**, where I had the privilege to participate in a research project regarding biomarkers for suicidal behaviors.

Associated with the world's oldest existing medical faculty from the 12th century, Department of Emergency Psychiatry and Post-Acute Care had an extensive variety of clinical applications to observe, mainly focused on suicidal behaviors and mood disorders. Besides the opportunity to observe case consultations, I had the chance to attend clinical meetings, scientific seminars, and case-based discussions that broadened my perspective on psychiatric practice and managed care in acute settings. One of the prominent interventions was the intravenous **ketamine infusion treatment** for individuals with acute and post-acute suicidal crisis. I had the chance to observe this process along with detailed evaluations before and after the application, performed by the healthcare team in the ward. Another important aspect of my clinical observation was the way healthcare services were delivered in a different health system. In my opinion, one of the most inspiring aspects of the **social health system** in France was its **inclusivity**, as well as its **multifaceted** and well-integrated **approach towards care**. A multidisciplinary team consisting of doctors, nurses, psychologists, pharmacists, social workers, and other members of relevant disciplines was involved in the collaborative assessment, treatment, and follow-up of individuals experiencing mental health conditions, to ensure that the required care would be effectively provided based on the biopsychosocial model. These impressions allowed me to reflect on how direct and indirect effects of the provision of mental health services, in terms of infrastructure, distribution of resources, or funding, have on the health and well-being of individuals and communities, and how those were primarily shaped by the political influences. Moreover, I became acquainted with **community-based national programs on suicide prevention**, which constitute promising and evidence-based interventions for the prevention and management of suicide. One example was the **crisis helpline** that was available 24/7 throughout the country for acute suicidal crises. This anonymous helpline was widely promoted and served as a critically important resource during an active crisis since it aimed to improve access to immediate lifesaving measures to secure safety and prevent suicide.

As part of the National Health and Medical Research Institute (Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale – INSERM), University of Montpellier's **research laboratory on neuropsychiatry** employed a multidisciplinary approach that generously accommodated international collaborations. The research team, led by **Prof. Philippe Courtet** and **Prof. Emilie Olié**,



was focused on suicidology across a diverse spectrum from the neurobiological foundations of suicide behavior to associated social determinants such as loneliness. I was truly fortunate to be involved in a research project on biomarkers of suicidal behavior in mood disorders, thanks to my supervisor, **Dr. Aiste Lengvenyte**, who kindly encouraged me to gain hands-on insights and shared her expertise on the relevant methodologies. At the same time, communication and networking opportunities with colleagues from other teams or disciplines were actively supported during the observership.

The timing of my observership pleasantly coincided with “**La Semaine du Cerveau**” (Brain Week) organized by the Société des Neurosciences across the country, which was not merely a week but a whole month full of activities regarding everyone’s mental health, such as movie debates, theatre performances, and roundtable discussions. It was inspiring to attend these events and learn about the creative, innovative work being done for people’s health and well-being in a wide range of areas of mental health. Moreover, it was impressive to see that such events create common spaces **where science meets the real world**, where service users and providers can interact and exchange ideas and experiences.

My experience in Montpellier with Gaining Experience Programme fully met my expectations and went beyond by giving me the opportunity to adopt new perspectives both professionally and personally. I strongly believe that this experience will be useful for my current practice in Turkey as well as my future aspirations. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my supervisor, **Dr. Aiste Lengvenyte**, all the colleagues in the Academic Hospital of Montpellier who were supportive and helpful, EPA for organizing such a fruitful programme, and each enthusiastic person who contributed to the continuation of this programme. With the understanding that a destination is a new way of seeing things, I would highly recommend joining this programme to all colleagues.

