



DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE MEDICHE E CHIRURGICHE

Bologna, March 22nd, 2018

To whom it may concern,

This is Dr. Tennekoon Karunaratne, motivated by Prof. Paul Enck from Tübingen University, writing to you in order to inquire on your availability to accept me as post-doctoral fellow in your research group.

First, I would like to introduce myself saying that in 2006 I completed my bachelor's studies at the University of Birmingham earning an honours degree in Bachelor of Medical Sciences (BMedSci). There I worked with Dr. Moray J Campbell in a project exploring the role of nuclear receptors (NRs) in bladder cancer and exploiting NRs as therapeutic targets in such tumours.

Following that period, I started my medical education at St. George's University Grenada and graduated with MD degree in 2011. During my medical studies I completed 80 weeks of clinical training at various hospitals in New York city, and passed United States Medical Licence Exam (USMLE) Step 1 and Step 2 and obtained ECFMG Certification. Upon graduating the medical school, I was admitted to a 12-month internship as a junior house officer at Grenada general hospital in Grenada.

In 2014, I received a Marie Curie fellowship as a part of the European Training in Neural Regulation of Intestinal Function -NeuroGut project funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme (PITN-GA-2013-607652) (www.neurogut.eu) and co-ordinated by Prof. Paul Enck in Tübingen to do a PhD at the University of Bologna. Since January 2015 I have been working under the supervision of Prof. Vincenzo Stanghellini and Prof. Roberto De Giorgio in a project aimed to study the small intestine motility in patients such as those affected by chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction (CIPO) and enteric dysmotility (ED) using standard manometry and histopathological analysis of small bowel (mainly jejunum) full thickness biopsies in order to establish a possible correlation between manometric patterns and underlying enteric neuromuscular pathology.

The results of this comparative study showed that the patients with abnormal intestinal manometry had abnormal histopathological findings in approximately three fourths of cases although the manometric patterns did not match with the specific neuromuscular abnormalities (see *Neurogastroenterol Motil.* 2017; doi: 10.1111/nmo.13219). I have also worked with my supervisors on other projects such as the assessment of patients with the extremely common syndrome referred to as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which I have tackled according to the possible relation to food, e.g. wheat and gluten as trigger of functional symptoms. In this respect I have evaluated patients with gluten (or wheat) sensitivity under the supervision of my mentors and in collaboration with Prof. Umberto Volta, a worldwide renowned expert of gluten-related disorders. Thanks to this exciting research group, I had the opportunity to contribute to the current knowledge on non-celiac gluten / wheat sensitivity with a highly quoted review article (see *Expert Rev Gastroenterol Hepatol.* 2017;11(1):9-18). The challenge will be to identify biomarkers for such otherwise unclear condition often confused as IBS or IBS-like disorder.



DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE MEDICHE E CHIRURGICHE

Culminating my PhD training at University of Bologna, I will discuss my PhD thesis titled "*Neurodegeneration and Neuroplasticity of the Intrinsic Innervation of the Gut in Severe Dysmotility*" on 20th April 2018. As a person who is interested in learning, research, teaching and exploring new countries and cultures I am interested in a post-doctoral position in clinical / translational research particularly in the field of neurogastroenterology where I can enhance my knowledge and skills in medicine and research. I desire to continue my training in Germany since it is known for its outstanding and strong focus on research and innovation supported by the highly developed infrastructure instituted in the country's esteemed research facilities and the renowned researchers of their field. I strongly believe that an opportunity to do research in Germany will help bring out the best in me and influence my future aspiration for a career in academic medicine

My complete dossier, including the letters of recommendation can be provided promptly when requested. I thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter for your consideration and I very much welcome any opportunity to discuss with you further.

Sincerely,

Tennekoon Karunaratne, MD, BMedSc(Hons.)