

EFLM project “Exchange of practical knowledge and skills in Laboratory Medicine” – EFLMLabX

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ABSTRACT

Background

In many laboratories/institutions of the European Federation for Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFLM) there is a need to acquire additional practical knowledge and skills in different fields of Laboratory Medicine (LM).

Until now, there were no possibilities, in official and open ways, to find the link to such additional but very important education, which may be obtained in other laboratories in the country or abroad. The aim of this EFLM project is to create and operate a network of medical laboratories willing and able to offer practical training in various fields/aspects of Laboratory Medicine.

Methods

We conducted the survey among EFLM members, with the aim to identify the EFLM members' needs and possibilities to offer different practical training in laboratories in the country or abroad. We created the EFLMLabX website portal within the main EFLM website for offering, searching the practices and establishing direct contacts between applicants and providers institutions.

Results

According to the very positive survey results (146 responses) about needs (128) and interest to offer different practices (87) on the field of LM, that we have obtained from EFLM National Societies (28) in 2015, we noted a great interest for training and exchange of practical knowledge and skills in LM amongst EFLM countries. In January 2018 we have launched EFLMLabX portal. Since now we have already 13 providers/ partners institutions, from 10 different countries, which offer 17 different practice positions. Four practices are already ongoing and two were already finished.

Conclusions

With this project, according to obtained higher level of knowledge/experience on different field of laboratory diagnostics of general professional population (of EuSpLM), better networks between professionals, experts, and scientists we will gain higher general quality of our profession.



INTRODUCTION

The Education for the specialists of Laboratory Medicine (LM) is very complex and according to common Syllabus concerns the knowledge on several different fields of diagnostics, methods, including practical laboratory training and skills (1,2). LM is undergoing continuing changes, due to medical information improvement, novel analytical technologies development and introduction of new tests. In many laboratories/institutions of EFLM Member Societies, to achieve complete competences of their specialist, there is a need to acquire additional practical knowledge and skills in different fields of Laboratory Medicine, due to the lack of opportunity and adequate professional experts (3). These may be obtained in other laboratories in the country or abroad. Until now, there were no possibilities,

on the official and open way to find the link to such additional but very important education, especially for young trainees, but also for all other European Specialists of Laboratory Medicine (EuSpLM), who want to share the knowledge of LM on a different level. Under the umbrella of EFLM, as a main and central European professional organization, there is now an option which could help to address this problem: the project "Exchange of practical knowledge and skills in Laboratory Medicine" which the Working Group for Congresses & Postgraduate Education (WG-CPE) is developing.

THE AIM OF EFLMLABX PROJECT

The aim of this EFLM project is to create and operate a network of medical laboratories willing and able to offer practical training in various fields/aspects of Laboratory Medicine; additionally, to enable the connections and direct communication between providers and potential users of practices. With this project, we would be able to establish the big nets-communication between LM professionals and contribute to the higher exchange of knowledge and experience and general quality of our profession. This project is also in a scope of our several year's attempts to get official recognition of our profession, according to the new EU Council Directive on recognition of professional qualifications and Regulation with the established free movement of professionals among EU member/European countries (4).

EFLM SURVEY ON THE NEED AND INTEREST FOR PRACTICAL TRAINING IN LM

The first phase of the project was to conduct the survey among EFLM members with the aim to identify the EFLM member needs for practical training in laboratories in the country or abroad and set up possibility and readiness of

laboratories offering such practical training in EFLM countries. We have prepared the questionnaire, which included two part of questions that were related to needs and possibilities to offer different practical experience and knowledge in EFLM laboratories and institutions. In March 2015 the related questionnaire was disseminated to all national representatives and society presidents and to a number of laboratories in EFLM Countries. According to the very positive survey results (146 responses) about needs (128) and interest to offer different practices (87) on the field of LM, that we have obtained from EFLM National Societies (28) in 2015, we

noted a great interest for training and exchange of practical knowledge and skills in LM amongst EFLM countries.

Therefore, we were stimulated for the next further step to create the website program to start and running the project.

EFLMLABX WEBSITE-PROGRAM

(<https://efmlabx.eflm.eu/en>)

A dedicated website for the EFLMLabX program was developed within the framework of the main EFLM website (Figure 1), offering the possibility to search and apply to the several practical training

Figure 1 EFLMLabX project on EFLM website



positions, and to establish direct links and communication opportunities between both providers and users/applicants of practices (Figure 2).

Training opportunities in the database can range from visiting, general specialist training to gaining skills necessary for specialized measurement methods or systems (introduction of new IVD systems), research methods provided by groups in laboratories and practical courses in laboratory medicine related topics. According to the added guide, here are the opportunities to sign up/login as a user or an offerer of practices, with the generation of the own user/offerer profile. Each provider/offerer of the practice, after application and evaluation/confirmation from the EFLM WG-CPE and signed contract (Memorandum of agreement) from both (EFLM and institution) site, become a trustable partner of the project, with the obligation to manage and update all information regarding institution and offered practice positions. At the end of each concluded

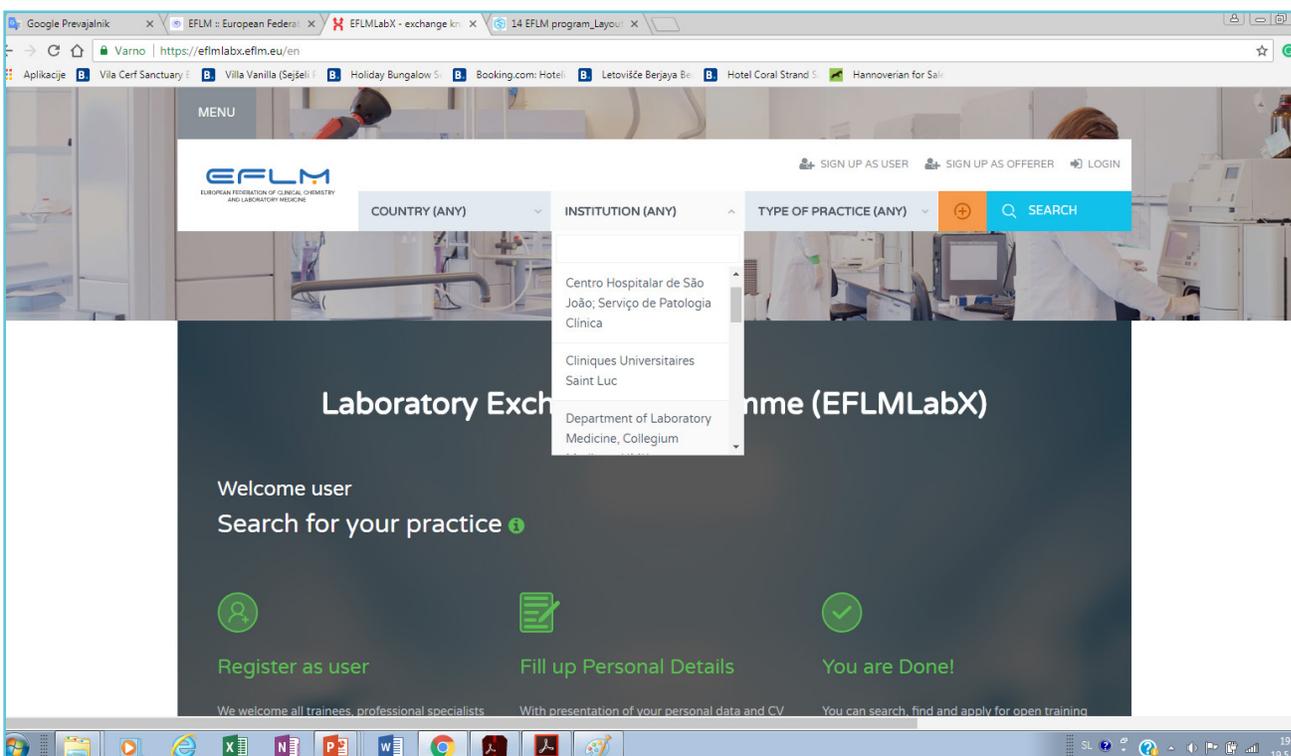
practice, each participant will receive Certificate of attendance. The future task of the WG-CPE will include also evaluation of these practices, with the possibility to gain CPD points for continuing professional development (5).

GOALS OF THE PROJECT

With such a project we will be able on EFLM level:

- to achieve **higher level of experience on different field** of laboratory diagnostics
- to **share the knowledge and experience** among practice **in different lab-institution**
- to learn and get/ exchange the knowledge and skills of **different diagnostic methods** (specific-GC –MS, new IVD systems...)
- to get the knowledge and skills of **specific field of diagnostics** (in terms of development and introduction of new diagnostics as an interest of participant/applicant's Laboratory-institution)

Figure 2 EFLMLabX project website



- to offer the opportunity for the young trainees and specialist to expanding **contacts with (between) the experts (motivation for work and research)**
- to get the opportunity for **research work** and as part of that to get additional knowledge and skills on academic level (eg writing scientific articles)
- to find the **new potential co-workers on diagnostic fields/research science**

FUNDATION FOR BURSARIES

To support this important exchange of knowledge and skills in LM, especially for young trainees, we would like to create the foundation for bursaries, that will be supported by IVD partners/sponsors. With bursaries would be possible to cover expences for traveling, accomodation and possible fee for education of participants. On that way we would be able to stimulate the exchange of knowledge between different professionals/laboratories/institutions and EFLM countries.

PILOT PROJECT AND FIRST EXPERIENCES

The EFLMLabX was launched in January 2018. The invitation to participate the project and join as a user or offerer was sent to all national representatives of EFLM. Since now we have already 13 providers/ partners institutions, from 10 different countries, which offer 17 different practice positions. Four practices are already ongoing and two were already finished.

CONCLUSIONS

EFLMLabX project of exchanging practice is/could be a useful tool for the young and already experienced professionals (EuSpLM) in LM to obtain higher level of knowledge/experience on different field of laboratory diagnostics and to establish better networks between professionals, experts, and scientists. With this project we could gain higher general quality of our profession.

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