



## THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY 2017 INTERNATIONAL GI TRAINING GRANT

The International GI Training Grant provides partial financial support to physicians outside of the United States and Canada to receive clinical or clinical research training or education in Gastroenterology and Hepatology in selected medical training centers in North America. The funding is provided so that an individual can acquire or develop new cognitive knowledge or a technical skill. This newly acquired knowledge or skill would then be used to improve patient care in the applicant's geographic area.

The amount of the grant will not exceed \$10,000, and is to be used for travel to and from the training center and to the ACG Annual Meeting as well as for incidental expenses related to the training. A travel grant may or may not be awarded in any given year.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

Physicians who are not citizens of nor are currently residing in the United States or Canada, and who are working in gastroenterology or related areas are eligible to apply together with his/her training institution. The training period must be for at least 6 months and must take place between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018.

### **REQUIREMENTS**

Applicants must submit a completed application form, a personal statement that summarizes the reasons and objectives of additional training, a curriculum vitae, copies of all published articles and abstracts within the last five years, and a completed application form from the host training center. Three letters of recommendation are also required — one from the training preceptor/director; one from an ACG Fellow; and another from a person of your choosing.

Applicants are responsible for selecting a host training center who will voluntarily agree to participate in the program. The host training center must be able to accomplish the training goals and must complete the host training center application. ACG is not be responsible for any additional financial obligation to the preceptor of the GI training program.

The International GI Training Grant of the College must be mentioned in any publication(s) generated by the awardee and host training center through this program. At completion of the training, the awardee must submit a written summary (critique, educational experience) to ACG.

Application forms can only be obtained online at [www.gi.org/research-and-awards](http://www.gi.org/research-and-awards). **All applications must be submitted in PDF file format by email to Maria Susano at [msusano@gi.org](mailto:msusano@gi.org) by March 31, 2017.**

### **REVIEW PROCESS**

The ACG International Relations Committee will select one awardee, subject to Board approval, based upon the applicant's credentials, the merit of the proposed training by the selected host training center and the potential of enhancing the field of gastroenterology in the applicant's home country.

**Applicants will be notified after July 1, 2017 with funding to begin after July 2017. Questions regarding this program should be sent to Maria Susano at [msusano@gi.org](mailto:msusano@gi.org).**



**AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY**  
6400 Goldsboro Road, Suite 200, Bethesda, Maryland 20817-5842  
Phone: 301-263-9000

## **INTERNATIONAL TRAINING GRANT APPLICATION FORM**

*To be filled out electronically by applicant:*

Name in Full: Irina Mihaela Cazacu

Office Address: 2 Petru Rares str., Craiova, Dolj, 200349, ROMANIA

Residence Address: 24A, ap 5, Fagaras str., Craiova, Dolj, 200504, ROMANIA

Phone: +40785216587 Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: irina.cazacu89@gmail.com

Date & Place of Birth: 15.01.1989, Craiova

### **Education**

College or University Attended and Dates: University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Craiova, Romania 2008-2014

Medical School Attended and Dates: Faculty of Medicine, University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Craiova, 2008-2014

Postgraduate Training:

	<u>Type</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Internship:	not applicable in Romania		

Residency: Internal Medicine, Filantropia Clinical Hospital, Craiova, 2015-present

Fellowship: -

Other: PhD Student, Research Center of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Craiova, Romania, 2016-present

Present Professional Position: Clinical researcher, Center for Translational Medicine, Pecs, Hungary

Funding Amount Being Sought: \$10,000

Other Financial Support Committed: none

Are There Sources for Travel Funds Available from your Government or elsewhere in your Country? no

If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons for Seeking Training (please fill out electronically):

*(A personal statement of what is to be learned and how it will improve delivery of GI care in your country or practice):*

I am a graduate of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy Craiova, Romania, PhD Student at the Research Center of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Craiova and Resident Physician in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of training. I am currently taking part in a postgraduate teaching programme in the field of medical pancreatology, offered by the European Pancreatic Club and I will be working for 6 months at the Center for Translational Medicine of Pecs, Hungary, the main topic of my research work being pancreatic cancer.

My clinical and research interests include gastrointestinal neoplasms, endoscopy and EUS in GI cancers, molecular genetics and gene expression profiles of pancreatic cancer.

My decision to apply for the GI Training Grant is in line with my interest in oncology.

Having the opportunity to work at MD Anderson Cancer Center will allow me to participate not only in the most advanced therapies available to cancer patients but also in high quality clinical research.

Oncology is the fastest growing field in medicine and no place could better prove me the importance of being up-to-date with current literature and state of the art techniques in the field of gastroenterology.

Combining clinical information with basic research findings is the way to move the field of gastro-oncology forward and find the best solutions for cancer patients. Therefore I just started my PhD studies and my project is on pancreatic cancer and markers detected by next-generation sequencing on EUS-FNA with focus on identifying mutations by making genome sequencing of the tumor tissue samples from the patients. This can be an important part for early diagnosis and targeting of drugs for the precise treatment of patients with pancreatic cancer.

I am in the early stages of my research career and having the chance to take part in the daily routine work at MDACC will provide me not only a high quality education in the field of oncologic GI research but also will give me an in-depth understanding of the investigation and management of patients with GI neoplasms. The training at MDACC under the supervision of prof Manoop S. Bhutani will be instrumental considering my interest on endoscopy and EUS in GI cancers. The aim is to participate in the research part on EUS with emphasis on personalized medicine, EUS-FNA and the molecular diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.

This research training should benefit my home institution when I return, leading to research developments and activities back onsite. At the moment, in Romania there is a lack of options for adequate research performance. Despite its special potential of intelligence, in Romania are carried out only few original research projects capable to find their way to international prestigious journals. The explanations have financial substratum like minimal budget which is given, difficulties in obtaining funds for projects, low number of grants available and several other limitations for young doctors to integrate research in their daily clinical activity. There are also difficulties in establishing priority directions of research. The future of Romanian medical research depends on the experience of Romanian doctors who are trained abroad and have widen their horizon in the medical field.

My goal is to work in the gastroenterology department with focus on oncologic aspects of gastroenterology. Consequently the training at MDACC, the best cancer center in the world, will have an outstanding impact not only on my future career but also on improving patient care in my geographic area. Cancer mortality rates in Romania are above the European Union. The underlying factors of this situation are the low number of oncologists, the lack of multidisciplinary communication and of systematic screening programmes especially in the field of gastroenterology. Worldwide, subspecialization within medical oncology has occurred to provide the required expertise needed to provide optimal patient care. In Romania, this concept is at the beginning but for sure will play an important role in changing the grim scenario of the Romanian oncology.

Consequently, my training at MDACC can reinforce my knowledge base and expend my expertise in GI neoplasms diagnosis, risk stratification and best practices for multidisciplinary communication.

**Checklist**

Please make sure that your application includes the following items before emailing a PDF file to ACG at [msusano@gi.org](mailto:msusano@gi.org):

Completed application form, including a personal statement on reasons for seeking training

Host training center application

Copy of curriculum vitae

Copies of published articles and abstracts (last 5 years)

Letters of recommendation (3): one of which is from the program director or mentor; one from an ACG Fellow; and one from a person of your choosing

I certify that the information I have provided on this application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of Applicant: Irina Mihaela Cazacu Date: 3/30/17

**AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY  
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING GRANT  
APPLICATION FORM**

*To be filled out electronically by host training center and forwarded with application by applicant:*

Hospital/Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Responsible for Applicant and Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Specific Training Objectives (outline including goals, schedule, etc.):

Duration of Program (include dates):

Previous Experience of Program with International Trainees (last five years only):

Housing Arrangements:

Signature of Program Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## PERSONAL INFORMATION



## Irina Mihaela Cazacu

Str Fagaras, nr.24A, bl.D15B, ap 5, 200504 Craiova (Romania)

+40 785 216 587

irina.cazacu89@gmail.com

## STUDIES APPLIED FOR

## International GI Training Grant - American College of Gastroenterology

## WORK EXPERIENCE

01/01/2017–01/07/2017	<b>Clinical researcher (Fellowship offered by the European Pancreatic Club)</b> Center for Translational Medicine, Pecs (Hungary)
01/10/2016–Present	<b>PhD Student</b> Research Center of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Craiova, ROMANIA
01/06/2016–Present	<b>Resident Physician</b> Medical Oncology, Filantropia Clinical Hospital, Craiova (Romania)
01/04/2016–30/06/2016	<b>Resident Physician</b> Hematology, Medical Institute Fundeni, Bucharest (Romania)
01/01/2016–31/03/2016	<b>Department of Radiology and Medical Imaging</b> County Clinical Emergency Hospital, Craiova (Romania)
01/10/2015–31/12/2015	<b>Resident Physician (Arzt im Praktikum)</b> Oncology-Hematology, Universitätsklinikum Magdeburg, Magdeburg (Germany)
01/01/2015–30/09/2015	<b>Resident Physician</b> Internal Medicine, Filantropia Clinical Hospital, Craiova (Romania)

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2008–2014	<b>University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Craiova, Romania</b> Title of qualification awarded: Doctor Medic Bachelor thesis: "Model informatic pentru evaluarea riscului de carcinogeneza hepatica"/ 'Informatic programm for the evaluation of hepatic carcinogenesis risk'
08/2012	<b>Professional exchange programme</b> Gastroenterology, Stavropol Regional Hospital, Stavropol (Russia)

09/2011 **Clinical Practice in dermato-oncology**  
Dept. of Dermatology, Modena University Hospital, Modena (Italy)

08/2009 **Research Exchange**  
Research Exchange project: "Evaluation of viral infection: chemical and biological aspects ", Bialystok (Poland)

2004–2008  
"Fratii Buzesti" National College, mathematics-informatics profile, Craiova (Romania)

### Workshops

2010: Knots and Sutures Workshop, SSCR Craiova  
2011: Basic Surgery Skills Workshop, SSCR Craiova  
2012: Applied Surgical Techniques Workshop, SSCR Craiova

## PERSONAL SKILLS

Mother tongue(s) Romanian

Other language(s)

	UNDERSTANDING		SPEAKING		WRITING
	Listening	Reading	Spoken interaction	Spoken production	
English	C1	C1	C1	C1	C1
Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) C1					
German	B2	B2	B2	B2	B2

Levels: A1 and A2: Basic user - B1 and B2: Independent user - C1 and C2: Proficient user  
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Organisational / managerial skills **Good experience in leading and decision**, as member of The University Senate (2012-2014) and member of The Faculty of Medicine Council (2012-2014) of University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Craiova

**Good experience in project management** (six years of voluntary work in regional, national and international student associations)

**Good experience in team management**, as *Vice-President* (2012-2013) of the "Romanian Students' Surgical Society"

Digital competence

SELF-ASSESSMENT				
Information processing	Communication	Content creation	Safety	Problem solving
Independent user	Independent user	Independent user	Independent user	Independent user

Digital competences - Self-assessment grid

Excellent Computer Proficiency in:

- Editing: Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Acrobat (Writer/Reader)
- Databases: Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel
- Photo Editing: Adobe Photo Deluxe, Adobe ImageReady, Adobe Photoshop, Corel PhotoPaint

- Other skills**
- Good communication skills gained through multiple local, national and international collaborations and meetings
  - Ability to establish and maintain good working relations with people
  - End-oriented work capacity
  - Good ability to adapt to multicultural environments, gained through my work experience abroad

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Conferences papers

- **2016** : National Conference of the Romanian Society for Medical Oncology SNOMR , '*Occult breast carcinoma with bone metastases*'
- **2013**: Craiova International Medical Students Conference, "*An idiopathic case of macroglossia diagnosed prenatally*"
- **2013**: The XV-th International Congress for Medical Students and Young Doctors Medis, Timisoara, "*Epidemiology of Head and Neck Cancer in Dolj County between 2000-2008*"
- **2012**: Craiova International Medical Students Conference, "*Tumoral Dissemination patterns on the CAM*"
- **2012** – The International Congress for Medical Students and Young Doctors Medis, Timisoara "*Contribution of Immunohistochemistry to the Diagnosis of Non-Hodkin's Malignant Lymphoma*",
- **2011** – "*Tumoral Dissemination Patterns on Chick Chorioallantoic Membrane* ", The XV-th International Congress for Medical Students and Young Doctors Medis, Timisoara
- **2010** – CIMSC, "*Early Diagnosis and Evaluation of Prostate Cancer Using Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA)*"
- **2010** – "*Histological and Immunohistochemical study of the inflammatory reaction in chronic tonsillitis*"

### Prizes

- **2013**: I Prize- Craiova International Medical Students Conference : "*An idiopathic case of macroglossia diagnosed prenatally*"
- **2013**: II Prize- The XV-th International Congress for Medical Students and Young Doctors Medis, Timisoara, "*Epidemiology of Head and Neck Cancer in Dolj County between 2000-2008*"
- **2012 II Prize** , Craiova International Medical Students Conference, : "*Tumoral Dissemination patterns on the CAM*"
- **2011**: III Prize, Craiova International Medical Students Conference, : "*Contributions to the study of vagal innervation of stomach and abdominal esophagus*"
- **17-24 iulie 2011** - II Prize - Trauma Camp 4rd Edition , Padina , in Cardiopulmonary resuscitation



## Conferences Abstracts

### 1. 2012 Craiova International Medical Students Conference

#### ***Tumoral Dissemination Patterns on Chick Chorioallantoic Membrane***

*I.M.Cazacu, M.Mesina, O.Voican, B.Mindrila*

*University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Craiova*

**Introduction:** Cancer biologists, developmental biologists and surgeons have described the chick chorioallantoic membrane(CAM) as a model system for studying development and cancer behavior, properties of biomaterials, angiogenesis and photodynamic therapy. In this study we followed the dissemination pattern of fluorescein and tumoral cells using tumoral biopsies implanted on the CAM and extracting cells from biopsies samples through tripsinisation.

**Materials and methods:** Fertilized chicked eggs were incubated at 37, 5 grd C and 60-70% humidity. After 24 hours of incubation, the eggs were cleaned with a 70% ethanol solution. Using a 18-gauge needle, 4 ml of albumen were extracted from the egg, which allows for a window of 1.5-2 cm to be cut at the top of the egg. The window was then sealed using a plastic tape and the egg was placed back in the incubator until days 7-9, when the CAM became capable of sustaining human tissue explant. 1-2 mm<sup>3</sup> of tumor biopsy or 0.1 ml of cell extraction were implanted on the CAM of different eggs. The photos were taken with an DCM 510 digital camera

**Results and conclusions:** The fluorescein dissemination pattern follows the blood vessels probably through lymphatic ducts. The extracted cells disseminate on the surface of CAM following the subjacent blood vessel, but when the vessel changes its position through angiogenesis and vascular remodeling the dissemination pattern didn't change. The implant disseminates in two ways, one respecting the rules of the extracted cells and one similar to the fluorescein.

### 2. 2012 The International Congress for Medical Students and Young Doctors Medis, Timisoara

#### ***Contribution of Immunohistochemistry to the Diagnosis of Non-Hodkin's Malignant Lymphoma***

*C.Foarfa, I.M.Cazacu, M.Mesina, A.Amza, B.Ungureanu*

*University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Craiova*

**Introduction:** The positive and differential diagnosis of Non-Hodkin's Malignant Lymphoma requires additional techniques to complete the microscopic appearance of the lesion obtain by usual stains.

**Material and Methods:** The work is part of a broader study, which focused on studying extraganglionic lymphomas for a period of 9 years. The working material for the four cases presented was represented by biopsies from the surgical departments of Craiova Emergency County Hospital and was processed using classical method of paraffinisation in the pathology laboratory of the same hospital. The immunohistochemical method used was the avidin-biotin-peroxidase complex.

**Conclusions:** Immunohistochemical staining was useful not only in the positive but also in the differential diagnosis of the lymphoma.

### 3. 2013 Craiova International Medical Students Conference

#### ***An idiopathic case of macroglossia diagnosed prenatally***

*I.M.Cazacu, N.Cernea, R.Dragusin, I.Dominic*

*County Clinical Emergency Hospital, Craiova (Romania)*

Abnormal enlargement of the tongue, macroglossia, is a well-recognised clinical condition which can have a significant social and health-related impact. Macroglossia poses a difficult differential diagnosis. It can be an

isolated finding without any pathological significance or it can be associated with various syndromes or diseases. Beckwith Wiedemann Syndrome(BWS) represents a genetic syndrome with a diverse clinical expresison. It is one of the most common over-growth syndromes and it presents macroglossia in almost all its forms.

Case presentation: We report a case of macroglossia diagnosed prenatal. The ultrasound examination performed at 27 weeks of gestation showed fetal macroglossia. An enlarged rigid tongue was seen continuously protruding from the mouth during a 20 minutes scan and remained so on subsequent scans until delivery. At 37 weeks a cesarean section was performed for a nonreassuring fetal status because of a fetal atrial flutter, observed in a routine third trimester scan. Facing a macroglossia of unknown origin, BWS and Down Syndrome were suspected and needed to be excluded. None of them was confirmed. The protruding tongue was also present after birth.

Macroglossia poses a difficult differential diagnosis. Distinction between isolated macroglossia and syndromes like BWS and Down may be difficult considering only clinical features. Genetic and molecular tests need to be performed to establish the final diagnosis.

#### **4. 2016 National Conference of the Romanian Society for Medical Oncology SNOMR**

##### ***Occult breast carcinoma with bone metastases***

*I.M.Cazacu, S.Raileanu, M.Danciulescu  
Filantropia Clinical Hospital, Craiova*

Bone metastasis occur frequently in patients with breast cancer, but they are seldom the first manifestation of the malignant process.

We report the case of a 42-year-old patient, diagnosed in November 2015 with bone metastasis from an unknown primary site. A right breast tumor was identified, but the imaging and microscopic aspect sugested it is a benign process(fibroadenoma). The investigations undertaken have not detected the origin of the bone metastases. In May 2016, conservative surgery was performed in order to re-evaluate the breast tumor and the diagnosis of fibroadenoma was confirmed. A month later, the breast ultrasound highlighted changes in the breast, suggesting a malignant process, which was subsequently confirmed by histopathology (invasive mammary carcinoma). The adequate treatment was initiated.

#### **5. 2017 European Pancreatic Club Annual Meeting**

##### **Mutations of CFTR, but not of SPINK1 elevate the risk for pancreatic cancer: a meta-analysis**

*I.M.Cazacu, N.Farkas, K.Marta, M.Sahin-Toth, P.Hegyi  
Institute for Translational Medicine, Pecs, Hungary*

##### **Introduction:**

Mutations in the PRSS1, SPINK1, CFTR, CTSC, CEL and CPA1 genes are associated with an elevated risk for chronic pancreatitis which, in turn, may increase the risk for pancreatic cancer (PC).

##### **Aims:**

The aim of the present study was to evaluate the association between the pancreatitis-related genes and PC risk via meta-analysis.

##### **Materials & methods:**

A literature search was performed using Pubmed, EMBASE and Cochrane Library. 321 articles were found in Pubmed, 364 in EMBASE, 0 in Cochrane and 13 identified through references. After removing unsuitable articles and duplications, 8 were found to be eligible. The association was assessed by odds ratios (ORs) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). Heterogeneity tests were also performed.

### **Results:**

A total of 6 case-control studies, comprising 847 cases and 1890 controls for SPINK1 mutations and 4 case-control studies, comprising 1223 cases and 18924 controls for CFTR mutations were enrolled in our analysis. There were 2 articles on PRSS1, 1 on CTSC and none on CEL and CPA1 mutations. SPINK1 mutations showed no association with pancreatic cancer (OR, 1.321 CI:0.749-2.330, P=0.336), while mutations in CFTR modestly increased the risk for PC (OR, 1.530; CI:1.181-1.955, P=0.001).

### **Conclusion:**

The present meta-analysis demonstrated that mutations in CFTR modestly increase the risk for PC whereas no association was found between SPINK1 and PC.



## Recommendation letter

### To whom it may concern

I am writing this letter of support for Mrs. Irina Cazacu, PhD student of the Research Center of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, University of Medicine and Pharmacy Craiova, Romania. Dr. Irina Cazacu is currently enrolled in the postgraduate teaching programme in the field of medical pancreatology offered by the European Pancreatic Club. Her current position implies a 6 months training at the Center of Translational Medicine of Pecs, Hungary, with the aim of mastering systematic reviews and meta-analyses in the field of pancreato-biliary diseases.

Through her future work in the Endoscopy Division of the Gastroenterology Department of the Research Center of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Craiova, Romania, Dr. Irina Cazacu will be involved in the current research grants related to endoscopic ultrasound (EUS) and confocal laser endomicroscopy (CLE), with emphasis on the increasing role of state-of-the-art endoscopic imaging in focal pancreatic diseases. These will be complemented in a reverse translational approach based on molecular biology, consisting of qRT-PCR and next generation sequencing based on EUS-guided fine needle aspiration (FNA) samples obtained during daily routine clinical procedures.

A scholarship to MD Anderson Cancer Center will be pivotal in both her future training in gastrointestinal oncology, but also for the development of our Gastroenterology Department and improvement of the continuous collaboration between our two departments.

I personally look forward to embark in future translational research projects / grants and collaborative trials, supported through the training of Dr. Irina Cazacu.

28.03.2017

Prof. Dr. Adrian Săftoiu, MD, PhD, MSc, FASGE

Craiova, Str. Petru Rareș Nr. 2, Cod 200349, Jud. Dolj, ROMÂNIA  
Mobile: +4 0744 823355; Fax: +4 0251 310287; E-mail: [adriansaftoiu@gmail.com](mailto:adriansaftoiu@gmail.com)



To whom it may concern,

March 27, 2017

### REFERENCE LETTER

This reference letter is written to support **Dr. Irina Mihaela Cazacu**'s application for The International GI Training Grant offered by the American College of Gastroenterology.

Dr. Irina Mihaela Cazacu has joined the Institute for Translational Medicine of Pécs a few months ago. She is a talented and energetic young member of our team, who can act independently and who has the determination to push a project forward. She is one of the best PhD students who has ever worked in my lab.

She showed great interest in field of gastrointestinal neoplasms, especially pancreatic cancer and I am sure that she will make a major contribution to pancreatic research during her career. Her plan is to be trained at well known medical centers from abroad. Participating in the daily routine work in MD Anderson Cancer Center will be of significant help in the further development of her career as a clinical researcher.

Therefore, I support her application without any reservations.

If you have any questions I am more than happy to answer, please see contact details below.

Péter Hegyi

March 30, 2017

Dr. Douglas Morgan, M.D.  
Chair, International Relations Committee  
American College of Gastroenterology  
Bethesda Maryland

RE: 2017 International GI training Grant for Dr. Irina Cazacu

Dear Dr. Morgan,

It is my distinct pleasure to write this letter of support for Dr. Irina Cazacu who is applying for the 2017 international GI training Grant by the American College of gastroenterology. Irina is currently pursuing a PhD in the research center of gastroenterology and hepatology at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Craiova, Romania. She is a young physician who finished her medical school from Craiova. Her training in gastroenterology currently is under the guidance and mentorship of Prof. Adrian Saftoiu who is the head of the research center in gastroenterology and hepatology in Craiova, Romania. Irina's interests include gastrointestinal neoplasms, gastrointestinal oncology, role of endoscopy and endoscopic ultrasound in gastrointestinal cancers including molecular genetics and gene expression profiles of pancreatic cancer.

Pancreatic cancer is a devastating disease and is a major focus for clinical care and research efforts at our institution. Pancreatic cancer is part of the Moonshot program at M.D. Anderson with the intention to make significant advances in the screening, detection and treatment of pancreatic cancer in next 10 years.

As part of this ACG international training grant, Irina will spend 6 months at M.D. Anderson under my direct supervision and mentorship. I am the director for endoscopic research and development at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. As a member of the international relations committee of ACG, a couple of months ago I received a communication from Ms. Maria Susano requesting that international relations committee members contact our colleagues around the world to let them know of this international training grant. In response to this as I contacted my colleagues around the globe, Prof. Saftoiu contacted me and proposed the possibility of sending one of his bright and promising junior doctors to train and perform research at M.D. Anderson for a period of 6 months. It should be noted that she is not the one who applied for this grant on her own but was selected for this by her chief and mentor in Romania as he considered her to be the most appropriate candidate for this award from their unit. The plan is for Irina to spend 6 months at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center which is rated as the #1 Cancer Center in the world to learn management of gastrointestinal cancer patients in a gastroenterology unit at a tertiary cancer center in a

multidisciplinary fashion in close collaboration with surgical oncologists, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists and other allied services. The plan for her is to go back to her unit in Romania and develop a focused clinical and research interest in gastrointestinal oncology. As you will notice from her CV, she has already taken important steps in this direction.

During her visit at M.D. Anderson I will personally mentor her. I have mentored numerous international fellows and faculty over last 20 years who have then gone back to their units in their respective countries and become leaders in their field. This includes visiting physicians and junior faculty from countries like China, India, Spain, Brazil, Egypt and Japan. We have a very busy gastroenterology and endoscopy unit with 15 faculty members. We perform a complete panel of simple to complex endoscopic procedures and she will observe the indications, findings and clinical implications of the work we do in our unit. She will observe and learn the multidisciplinary manner in which we operate. For example after observing an endoscopic ultrasound in a cancer patient she will then see my colleagues or me present those findings at our multidisciplinary tumor board and discuss the implications of our findings with our oncology colleagues. She will attend our regularly scheduled conferences. She will also participate in clinical research under my direct supervision related to pancreatic cancer or other GI cancers. It should be noted that I have had a collaboration with her mentor in Romania (prof. Saftoiu) for last 10 years. He has visited us a few times for short periods and I have also visited his unit twice. However there is a difference in a short visit as a visiting physician for a few days and becoming an integral part of a department for a longer period such as 6 months. Irina's spending 6 months with us has long-term implications in furthering the collaboration between our institution and the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Craiova, Romania as she will be expected to be instrumental in initiating programs in Romania that she would have learned at our cancer center during her stay here.

As a past chair of the International Relations Committee of the ACG who presided over the selection committee of this award, I can clearly say that in my opinion Dr. Cazacu is exactly the kind of person who can greatly benefit from this award due to a number of reasons. First of all she does not have any other scholarship or grant from her university or other sources that will allow her to come and train at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center for 6 months. Therefore unless she is selected for this grant this will not happen. Her winning of this grant will likely be a turning point in her career and I predict that upon her return to Romania in a few years she will become one of the leaders in the field of gastrointestinal cancers in her country. In addition upon my review of the past winners of this award, this ACG grant has never been given to somebody from Romania. ACG certainly needs to diversify its global impact.



I also believe that the College takes great pride in promotion and career development of women since there is a need to develop more women leaders in gastroenterology as traditionally it has been a male dominated field. Romania is one of the countries from the Eastern block to join the European Union and one of the least developed in the EU. There is a significant gastrointestinal cancer burden there. One of the criteria for selection of this grant is the potential for impact in their home country. Cancer mortality in Romania is one of the highest in the European Union. ACG takes great pride in promoting global health and aligns/collaborates with World Gastroenterology Organization to especially promote education and research in the developing and less privileged countries. Therefore in this spirit I believe this promising young physician from Romania is very well suited and most deserving of this grant.

I sincerely hope that the committee will favorably look at her application and select her for this prestigious grant. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide you with any other information.

Respectfully submitted,



Manoop S. Bhutani, MD, FACG, FASGE, FACP, AGAF, Doctor Honoris Causa  
Past Chair and Member, ACG International Relations Committee  
Professor of Medicine  
Eminent Scientist of the Year 2008, World Scientist Forum  
Director of Endoscopic Research and Development  
Department of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition-Unit 1466  
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center  
1515 Holcombe Blvd.,  
Houston, Texas, USA 77030-4009  
Phone: 713-794-5073  
Fax: 713-563-4398  
[manoop.bhutani@mdanderson.org](mailto:manoop.bhutani@mdanderson.org)