

OARSI TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

Applicant: Rebecca Bianca Ramalho

Host Center: Erasmus Medical Center

Supervisor: Erin Macri

Thanks to the OARSI scholarship, I had the opportunity to spend four months at Erasmus MC in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, where I was very warmly welcomed by all members of the Department of Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine, under the supervision of researcher Erin Macri. During this period, I actively participated in all meetings, activities, and discussions that are part of the department's routine, and I had my first experience working with a large database.

The project consisted of an individual participant data (IPD) meta-analysis of clinical trials that used mechanical devices for the treatment of knee osteoarthritis, assessed physical function using the Western Ontario and McMaster Universities Osteoarthritis Index (WOMAC) and the Knee injury and Osteoarthritis Outcome Score (KOOS), and applied a Global Rating of Change (GROC) question. These clinical trials were available in the OA Trial Bank, and after applying the eligibility criteria, we calculated the Minimal Important Change (MIC) of the physical function subscales of these questionnaires, which are widely used to assess function in this population.

In addition to learning how to handle sensitive data in a safe and responsible manner, I gained in-depth knowledge of several statistical analyses, as we applied innovative methods to estimate MIC. This project was undoubtedly challenging and contributed substantially to my development as a researcher.

I was extremely fortunate to be part of a highly committed team and to engage in rich discussions with leading experts in the field, such as researcher Berend Terluin, who was always available for revisions and scientific discussions. My closest collaborator, Sreemanjari Kandhasamy, has outstanding statistical skills and, with great attention, generosity, and humility, guided me throughout the entire process, together with my supervisor, Erin Macri. Erin dedicated significant time to listening to me and providing invaluable feedback, which went far beyond research topics and included guidance on time management, building functional teams for large projects, improving presentation skills, and many other valuable

pieces of advice that I will carry with me as I strive to become a better researcher and future supervisor.

In addition, Erin made a point of investing in my academic networking. Regarding the laboratory culture, I learned that although work is very important, investing in a healthy and collaborative environment that values unity and shared moments with colleagues is essential, given the significant amount of time we spend working.

This experience was undoubtedly a turning point in my academic career and also in my personal life. I am deeply grateful to OARSI, to Erin, and to everyone I had the opportunity to work with and learn from during these four months.

