

From India to Sweden: How the ISSCD Mentor & Mentee Programme Shaped Scientist Avinash Lomash's Research Journey

The ISSCD Mentee in Mentorship (M-in-M) Programme provides early-career researchers with the opportunity to learn from leading experts, develop new skills, and build international collaborations. The ISSCD spoke with Avinash Lomash, a 2025 M-in-M recipient, about his experience visiting Lund University, the impact the programme has had on his career, and why he encourages others to apply.

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your research?

My name is Dr Avinash Lomash. I am a scientist in the Department of Education and Research at Artemis Hospital in India. During my PhD, I specialised in the genetics and metabolomics aspect of celiac disease, with a particular focus on evaluating Non-HLA markers and early disease prediction in high-risk first-degree relatives of children with celiac disease. I am a recipient of "National Scholar- India" title provided by United European Gastroenterology Society for my research work on celiac disease.

Today, my research continues to focus on celiac disease, particularly proteomics, metabolomics, and advances in diagnostic technologies. My goal is to improve our understanding of the disease and contribute to the development of more accurate and sensitive diagnostic approaches.

How did you become involved in the ISSCD Mentee in Mentorship Programme?

Last year, I had the opportunity to speak with Professor Daniel Agardh at Lund University. Professor Agardh is internationally recognised for his contributions to celiac disease research, particularly through the TEDDY study and his work on diagnostics.

Following our discussions, and with his encouragement, I applied to the ISSCD Mentee in Mentorship Programme. I was honoured to be selected as a 2025 recipient, which gave me the opportunity to visit Lund University in Sweden and learn cutting-edge techniques in next-generation autoantibody testing.

What was the most valuable part of your experience in Lund?

The entire team at CRC, Lund University was incredibly welcoming and supportive. I had the privilege of learning from Professor Daniel Agardh (PI), Dr Carin Andren Aronsson

(Co-PI), Dr Alexander Lind (Co-PI) and interacted with many talented researchers, including Rasmus Bennet, Charlotte Brundin, Ida Jonsson, Zeliha Mestan, Evelyn Tekum, Nagmeh Karimi, Samia Hamdan, Linda Faxius and Anita Ramelius.

What made the experience particularly special was being able to learn both the established gold-standard methods for autoantibody detection, such as radio binding assays for TG2 IgA and IgG antibodies, alongside novel emerging technologies.

One of the most exciting techniques I learned was ADAP (Antibody Detection by Agglutination-PCR), an innovative, ultra-sensitive platform for autoantibody detection. Professor Agardh's laboratory is among the few groups pioneering this technology in celiac disease research.

In many ways, I felt I was learning both the history and the future of autoantibody testing in a single visit.

How has the programme influenced your research?

The programme has had both immediate and long-term impacts on my career.

Immediately after the visit, Professor Agardh encouraged me to write a review paper examining the future of next-generation autoantibody testing. Traditional testing platforms have served us well, but newer technologies offer important advantages, including multiplexing capabilities and ultra-high sensitivity.

The manuscript has now completed peer review, and we hope it will be published soon. I look forward to sharing it with the ISSCD community once it is available.

The programme also opened the door to future collaborations. During my visit, we discussed several research ideas that are now developing into collaborative projects. One additional manuscript is already in preparation, and I hope these collaborations will continue for many years.

Did the programme help you expand your professional network?

Absolutely.

One of the greatest benefits was the opportunity to interact with world-leading experts in celiac disease research, including Professor Daniel Agardh, Professor Kalle Kurppa

from Tampere University, and Professor Jason Tye-Din from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Australia.

Being able to exchange ideas with researchers whose work I have admired for many years was incredibly inspiring. Those conversations have already led to new research ideas and potential future collaborations.

Will we see you at the International Celiac Disease Symposium (ICDS) in Melbourne?

I certainly hope so!

I am currently preparing an abstract based on my latest work in metabolomics proteomics and lipidomics. The research explores time-related metabolome changes in patients from diagnosis through six and twelve months of follow-up.

I'm looking forward to submitting the abstract and, hopefully, presenting my work at ICDS in Melbourne.

What advice would you give to researchers considering applying for the Mentee in Mentorship Programme?

I would strongly encourage anyone with a genuine interest in celiac disease research to apply.

This programme has genuinely broadened my research horizons. It has given me knowledge, international experience, mentorship from world-leading experts, and a much clearer vision of where I want my research to go.

Perhaps most importantly, it helped me become more focused. Learning directly from experts in the field is an experience that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

Finally, was there anything unexpected that you took away from the experience?

One memory that has stayed with me wasn't actually in the laboratory.

While I was working on a manuscript, Professor Agardh asked whether I had visited the park across the road. When I told him I hadn't, he encouraged me to take a walk during lunch.

He said it would refresh my mind and help generate new ideas.

That simple advice reflected something I really appreciated during my time in Sweden, the balance between hard work, creativity and wellbeing. It reminded me that good science isn't only about working longer hours; it's also about giving yourself the space to think.

That lesson is something I will carry with me throughout my career.

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