



BRACHYTHERAPY

In memory of Professor Johan Jacob (Jan) Battermann, 1945-2020



Dear colleagues and friends,

With sadness we announce that Jan Battermann passed away on 21 July 2020. Jan was married, he had two children and three grandchildren. He was fond of classical music, modern art and Alfa Romeo cars.

Jan Battermann started his career in 1970 at the Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Ziekenhuis (AvL hospital,) in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Initially he wanted to become a surgeon but since he would have had to wait for two years to start the training he readily accepted a trainee position in the radiotherapy department. The position was offered to him by Professor Klaas Breur. Radiotherapy and especially brachytherapy became his interests because of the surgical approaches to be developed.

At that time the first machines for remote afterloading were introduced by the manufacturer Nucletron. These machines boosted the development and application of new brachytherapy techniques. Jan also showed an interest in the application of fast neutrons. A d+T fast neutron facility was installed at the AvL in 1974 and his PhD thesis (1981), which was entitled "Clinical Application of Fast Neutrons," describes the results of treatment of patients in the period 1975 to 1980.

In 1986 Jan Battermann succeeded Professor Hennie van Peperzeel as professor and head of the Department of Radiotherapy at the Academic Hospital Utrecht (now the University Medical Center Utrecht). Jan was dedicated both to his patients and to his residents. He trained numerous young radiation oncologists and loved to be a tutor, especially to the students who had interest in brachytherapy. Through Jan's individual support many of them developed the manual skills that were needed for sophisticated brachytherapy applications. He was a pioneer of the use of radioactive-iodine seed implants for transrectal ultrasound (TRUS) and he became the first person in Europe to establish a clinical service. Quite independently and at about the same time, prostate brachytherapy was started in Leeds (UK) and in Kiel (Germany). The European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) became aware of the growing interest in this new form of treatment. However, in these early years, there was competition between the urology and radiotherapy communities regarding leadership in the field. Jan believed that cooperation between the different disciplines was better than conflict and invited Theo de Reijke (a urologist in Amsterdam) to represent the European Association of Urologists (EAU). This collaborative work resulted in the well-known ESTRO/EAU-endorsed prostate brachytherapy teaching course with Dan Ash, Jan Battermann and György Kovács as joint directors. This was the first interdisciplinary teaching course that was endorsed by two European societies and became a success. After 10 years, the founding directors handed the course over to the next generation. They established Leeds, Utrecht and Kiel as centres of excellence and made prostate brachytherapy available throughout Europe, which has been of great benefit to thousands of men. Jan stimulated young doctors and physicists to take their roles in clinical routines and ongoing interdisciplinary developments in the field. With Nucletron, he introduced and clinically applied a remote afterloader and intraoperative treatment planning system for I-125 seeds. He encouraged the development of robotic brachytherapy, but also believed that the doctor was hard to beat.

But Jan Battermann not only gave prostate brachytherapy a chance to develop further. He also embraced the new brachytherapy concepts for other tumour sites. In the first decade of this century, for example, the then young gynaecology team in Utrecht gained Jan's support for the development of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)-guided brachytherapy. This included the development of new techniques and new applicators; the Utrecht MRI-compatible applicator for brachytherapy of cervical cancer was one example. With regard to anal cancer, free-loop implantations for low-dose-rate treatments were introduced, and for head, neck and skin cancers, Jan supported the development of individual mould techniques.

Jan Battermann was author or co-author of more than 100 publications, about half of which considered the treatment of patients with prostate cancer. He described the development of the technique and the clinical outcome. He showed that an I-125 seed implant for patients with low- and intermediate-risk prostate cancer was a treatment that produced results which were comparable with or better than prostatectomy. He was also a promotor of numerous PhD students and doctors in various fields of brachytherapy, hyperthermia and external beam therapy. In 2011 he received the Groupe Européen de Curiethérapie (GEC)-ESTRO iridium award.

The brachytherapy community has lost a pioneer.



Dan Ash
Consultant in clinical oncology
Cookridge Hospital
Leeds, United Kingdom



Ina Jürgenliemk-Schulz
Department of Radiotherapy
UMC Utrecht, The Netherlands



György Kovács
Radiotherapy Residential School
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Rome, Italy
Professor emeritus at University of Lübeck, Germany



Rien Moerland
Department of Radiotherapy
UMC Utrecht, The Netherlands



ESTRO/EAU prostate brachytherapy teaching course, Nice, France, 2008



"Faculty in Nice, pictured from left to right are: "J.-M. Cosset, J.J. Battermann, B. Carey, R. Moerland, G. Kovacs, F.-A. Siebert, T. de Reijke, B Al Qaisieh. Not pictured: S Machtens"

