



# BRACHYTHERAPY

## Interview with Frank-André Siebert, chair-elect of the Groupe Européen de Curiethérapie (GEC)-ESTRO committee

### *Congratulations on winning the elections. How do you feel?*

Thank you very much! I feel very honoured to chair the GEC-ESTRO committee in the future. When I started in GEC-ESTRO many years ago, I met all these famous brachytherapy people, and I never thought that I would chair the committee myself years later.

### *Are you ready to take on the task of chair-elect?*

I have been a member of the GEC ESTRO Committee and the ESTRO Physics Committee for many years and have learned a lot about the work of the ESTRO committees. Moreover, the former chair (Ina Jürgenliemk-Schulz) and the current chair (Vratislav Strnad) are supporting me. This is a great help and guarantees a high stability in the leadership of GEC-ESTRO. So, having this background, I feel ready to take on new tasks.

### *What has been your involvement in ESTRO, and particularly GEC-ESTRO?*

In 2003, I joined the BRAPHYQS working group and ten years later became its chair. I am also involved in projects of other GEC-ESTRO working groups – in particular UroGEC – and as the Head and Neck and Skin Group. I have been invited to join several scientific advisory groups for ESTRO conferences and the organisation of GEC-ESTRO workshops. In addition, I have participated in some European projects such as ACCIRAD, Samira, T2.J06, and PRISM-eBT. I am also a member of the ESTRO Physics Committee, which provides a good link to the GEC ESTRO Committee. For GEC-ESTRO, I am also the liaison person to the American Association of Physicists in Medicine American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM) Brachytherapy Subcommittee (BTSC). In general, I really enjoy international cooperation with committed people.

### *What do you enjoy most about your activities in GEC-ESTRO?*

First of all, I like the positive spirit in GEC-ESTRO. All people there share the same goal: to use brachytherapy for patients' health. Because of this shared aim, the work in GEC-ESTRO takes place in a very friendly atmosphere. And because we are convinced of the value of brachytherapy, people are willing to work hard for it! This is really fun, as we see that together we can achieve a lot.

### *How do you cope with balancing your commitments in your department, GEC-ESTRO and of course your family?*

That is an important point. As Head of the Department of Medical Physics, I have some freedom in planning my time. I also have support from my family and have explained to them why getting involved with ESTRO is an important job. Because of the Covid-19 crisis, we conduct many meetings in an online format, and while I prefer to see colleagues face-to-face, using digital facilities sometimes makes it easier to attend numerous meetings.

### *Do you see any challenges for GEC-ESTRO in the future?*

The GEC-ESTRO committee plays an important role in ESTRO. As one of the standing committees, it guarantees its members stability and continuous progress in brachytherapy. In view of future challenges, I think education in brachytherapy is crucial. We need to attract young colleagues to brachytherapy and provide good training. We also need to continue to advocate for brachytherapy to be seen as an important component of radiation therapy. In the past, we have been able to demonstrate that brachytherapy is an excellent choice for many patients with tumours. This message needs to be spread more widely, and brachytherapy ultimately needs to be used more often.

## ***And you personally, do you foresee any challenges that could arise in your term eventually as chair?***

I sincerely hope that Covid-19 will not affect our ESTRO work as in previous years. Reliable organisation of meetings, courses, workshops and conferences is an important part of ESTRO's social life that we must maintain. Based on our experience with the pandemic, we have the opportunity to optimise our event formats in order to reach the largest possible audience on the one hand, and to have a fruitful interaction with the participants on the other.

## ***Are there any particular areas in GEC-ESTRO you would like to address?***

I am very much looking forward to representing GEC-ESTRO. In the future, I would like to emphasise the advantages of brachytherapy - high doses and low toxicity - in modern radiotherapy concepts. This applies to combination therapies (external beam radiotherapy and brachytherapy) as well as brachytherapy alone.



### **Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Frank-André Siebert**

Chair-elect, GEC-ESTRO Committee  
Medical Physicist / Head of Medical  
Physics Department  
UKSH, Campus Kiel  
Clinic of Radiotherapy  
Kiel, Germany  
Frank-Andre.Siebert@uksh.de

### ***About Frank-André Siebert***

Frank-André Siebert passed his diploma in physics in 1993 at Kiel University (Germany). After this, he worked on his PhD in radiotherapy on image registration and dose calculation of large field techniques in external radiotherapy and became a certified medical physicist. He started to be interested in brachytherapy at the University Clinic of Radiotherapy in Kiel. In his postdoctoral thesis (habilitation), Frank-André Siebert dealt with aspects of quality assurance in brachytherapy. He worked with Prof. György Kóvacs for many years and is experienced in most brachytherapy techniques, such as LDR seed implants, HDR prostate, gynaecological brachytherapy, breast, head and neck, and skin, as well as in PDR techniques and Ruthenium eye plaques. Since 2008 he has been Chief Medical Physicist in the Department of Medical Physics at UKSH, Campus Kiel and responsible for all medical physics aspects in the clinics of Radiotherapy and Nuclear Medicine. In 2015 he was appointed Professor. In his role as chair of the GEC-ESTRO BRAPHYQS working group, he pushed the international visibility of BRAPHYQS and cooperation with the AAPM, which resulted in many publications and recommendations, some of these jointly with AAPM. He is a member of several AAPM task groups and a member of the AAPM BTSC. In addition to brachytherapy, he is interested in risk management and QA in external beam radiotherapy. Frank-André Siebert is an editorial board member of the Brachytherapy Journal, Radiation Oncology, and Radiotherapy and Oncology. He is also co-editor of the Journal of Contemporary Brachytherapy. Besides more than 60 publications and over 100 abstracts, he is the author of several book chapters. Frank-André Siebert is the father of three children and when not in the clinic he likes to cook and read. He is interested in art and has been doing Jiu-Jitsu as a trainer for many years.

