



BRACHYTHERAPY

Interview with chair of the 2021 Groupe Européen de Curiethérapie-European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology workshop

9-10 Feb 2022, online

This was the eighth edition of the annual Groupe Européen de Curiethérapie-European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (GEC-ESTRO) workshop. How do you feel about this? Any challenges?

Let me begin by addressing the challenges. As you might remember, in late 2020 we had to cancel the GEC-ESTRO workshop due to covid. After that we waited quite a long time, aiming to hold an event in late November 2021 that would be online for some participants but would be hosted in person in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. We were quite hopeful that this would be possible until, in early November 2021, the covid numbers increased steeply again. Finally, only one week before the workshop was due to be held, the Dutch government brought in new regulations that included a partial lockdown. The entire workshop had to be cancelled within five days. We had to take care of colleagues who were already on their way to Rotterdam. Working-group meetings that were intended to be held in person were transformed into online meetings, while the main event was postponed and re-organised.

The 2021 GEC-ESTRO workshop finally took place as a fully online event on 9-10 February 2022. Due to the efforts of the GEC-ESTRO committee, the ESTRO office, all speakers, chairs and industry partners, we were able to provide the initial programme. Thanks to the financial support of Elekta and Varian, workshop registration was offered for free. Somewhat unexpectedly, the interest in this online event was overwhelming and far beyond our expectations; we had more than 730 delegates from all brachytherapy professions and from 78 countries. Brachytherapy was the main theme of the workshop. So in the end, despite all, we are feeling quite good right now!!

Do you see tangible outcomes from the annual workshop?

The high number of delegates who attended from so many countries clearly demonstrates that brachytherapy is of interest to many professionals in radiotherapy worldwide. In retrospect, it was worth all the effort.

What was the workshop theme and why did you choose it?

The workshop theme was: "What's next? Emerging opportunities." We could not have chosen a better subject. With this theme we were hinting at the future of brachytherapy, but in the end, when we finally realised this event, we had to ask ourselves several times "what is next?" and "will there be new opportunities?"

How was the programme for the workshop developed?

The programme was agreed and developed by the GEC-ESTRO committee. It contained contributions from the working groups and from our industry partners.

Who was the workshop's target audience?

We wanted to reach all members in the field who were interested in brachytherapy; people and teams who were already treating their patients with brachytherapy and those who were planning to do so, no matter what profession or country they were from.

How would you advise a first-time participant to make the most of a GEC-ESTRO workshop?

Get in direct contact with people who you always wanted to speak with. Prepare questions and gather as much information as possible from involved staff, speakers and industry partners.

Any final remarks?

We have now started to plan the ninth GEC-ESTRO workshop, which will take place in November 2022. We are not giving up and plan to go to some place in Southern Europe. We are also exploring possibilities for a blended meeting. Keep your fingers crossed!!



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Chair, GEC-ESTRO workshop 2021

