Clinical poster award

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What does this award mean to you?

I think this award is the recognition of an outstanding and impactful, long-standing collaboration.

The consortium that aims to validate predictive models and biomarkers of radiotherapy toxicity to reduce side-effects and improve quality of life in cancer survivors, known as REQUITE, has worked together successfully since 2013. It is led by Professor Catharine West (professor of radiation biology, University of Manchester, UK) and brings together professionals and scientists with different backgrounds, from radiation oncologists and radiobiologists to epidemiologists, geneticists, medical physicists and biomedical engineers. Patients' representatives have been heavily involved from the beginning and brought unique perspectives to the goals and work of the consortium.

REQUITE performed a prospective observational study, which enrolled more than 4,000 patients who had been treated in the USA and eight countries in Europe. It created a huge, high-quality database that included relevant data for the modelling of radiation-induced toxicity. All data are now made available to the scientific community.
The consortium is still working together in the project entitled "personalised radiotherapy: incorporating cellular response to irradiation in personalised treatment planning to minimise radiation toxicity (RADprecise)" and the REQUITEplus project, which aim to reach a long-term follow-up of the enrolled patients.
I am proud to represent the whole consortium here and again underline that the work is from the entire collaboration.

To whom would you like to dedicate your award?

I would like to dedicate this award to Professor Claudio Birattari. More than 20 years ago, following a visionary perspective, he pushed me, as a medical physicist, to work on modelling outcomes after radiotherapy. At the same time, I would like to dedicate this award to my husband and children, who always supported my work - even if the children's biggest problem at school was (and still is) to answer the question "What is your mother's job?"

What is your next challenge?

I think the next challenge is to bring these research results to the clinics and to use prediction models, including genetic features, to personalise radiotherapy and the oncological path as a whole. We are trying to work on this, while we are aware that we need to validate our results on external populations and to merge hints on genetics' influence with other indicators of single patient radiosensitivity, such as epigenetic/microbiota factors.

If you hadn't been a scientist, what would you like to have been? / What are you proudest of in your career?

I love teaching, so I think I would have been a teacher. This is also related to the next question and answer. I am incredibly proud of my small team of young people who started working on modelling outcomes after radiotherapy and who, step-by-step, are building up their particular competencies, interests, ideas and projects.