



CONFERENCES

Emmanuel van der Schueren award



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What do you think are the next challenges for radiation oncologists (or radiation physicists, radiobiologists, radiotherapists, brachytherapists)?

The next challenges for radiotherapists (RTTs) really depend on their geographical location. For those who have sufficient undergraduate and postgraduate education, the next challenge is to define the RTT profession in the modern era of advanced technology and artificial intelligence. For those whose undergraduate education is not sufficient or is non-existent, the challenge remains what it was previously: to convince stakeholders, such as ministries of health and education, of the need to supply appropriate education for RTTs to ensure a level of quality in treatment delivery.

To whom would you like to dedicate your award?

I dedicate this award to my late parents, Michael and Margaret. My mother instilled in me a work ethic to always do my best. My father was the kindest, most generous person I have ever known. I am very honoured to dedicate this award in their memory.

What has been your involvement within ESTRO?

My involvement with the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) started in 2008, when I was a guest lecturer on the treatment planning course (later the basic treatment planning course). Subsequently I joined that faculty and later became the course director. I joined the RTT committee as an observer in 2009 and then served as the committee chair for six years. I have sat on the education council (formerly the education and training committee) for many years - this is my favourite activity in ESTRO! I play a liaison role for some of the school's taught courses and am chair of blended learning. As editor-in-chief of tipsRO, I sit on the scientific council. I am also a faculty member on the ESTRO-International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) project entitled 'Best practice in radiation oncology' - a project to train the RTT trainers, on the foundations of leadership in radiation oncology course and on the positioning and immobilisation course.

What are you most proud of in your career?

In the ESTRO sphere, I am most proud of three things. First is my involvement in the ESTRO-IAEA best practice in oncology train the trainers project. After 10 years of this project, we have tangible evidence of the benefit that it has brought to the practice of RTTs in Eastern Europe and ultimately to their patients. It has also empowered RTTs to act and take responsibility for the development of the profession in their respective countries, which is shown by the creation of their own national societies. Second is the development of the ESTRO RTT alliance during my time as chair of the RTT committee. The building of this alliance has enabled RTTs in more than 20 countries to join the ESTRO community.

Finally, the recent indexation of tipsRO in both PubMed and Scopus at the first attempt was a particularly proud moment. The creation and development of a journal that is specific to RTTs within ESTRO has been difficult. This was because, first, the community of RTTs in ESTRO is small relative to the communities of radiation and clinical oncologists and of medical physicists;

and because, second, funding of RTT research is low or non-existent in many countries. Despite these barriers, the journal continues to grow and develop for the RTT community.

If you hadn't been a scientist, what would you like to have been?

A food critic! I love to cook... and to eat!

