



CONFERENCES

Honorary Member award – C. René Leemans



C. René Leemans

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What have been the highlights of your career?

After my training in head and neck cancer, and reconstructive and microsurgical fellowship training, I have been able to work at the forefront of oncological developments, especially in surgical oncology, and to achieve improvements in quality of care. I remain interested in centralisation of head and neck oncological care, shifts to minimally invasive treatments, bench to bedside translation, and better and personalised psychosocial care. Ultrasound fine-needle aspiration cytology (FNAC) and sentinel node biopsy are a few examples of improved treatment methods.

All-in-all, I have tried to make a sustained contribution to cancer care, training and research in the broad field of head and neck oncology. I am particularly proud to have been able to co-found the European Head and Neck Society and to lead the successful "make sense" awareness campaign.

What is your next challenge?

We have to find ways to lessen the treatment burden on our patients and to incorporate the latest modalities (e.g., interventional oncology and less invasive surgery) into new treatment paradigms. Also, we need to find less toxic therapies for disease that is driven by the human papilloma virus. On the organisational level, as a departmental chair, I am currently leading the merger of two academic departments, otolaryngology and head and neck surgery.

What does this award mean to you?

I consider it a very honourable recognition of fellow oncologists. I know from personal experience that radiation oncologists hold multidisciplinary care, which is the only way forward, in high regard.

To whom would you like to dedicate your award?

Here I must pay tribute to my teachers, Gordon Snow, Rammohan Tiwari and David Soutar.

What has been your involvement within the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO)?

I have been fortunate to be part of a unique multidisciplinary group of teachers that organises a regular multidisciplinary course on management of head and neck oncology within the ESTRO school. I have also co-organised the highly successful bi-annual international congresses on innovative approaches in head and neck oncology (ICHNO).