



CONFERENCES

Honorary physicist award



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What have been the highlights of your career?

One highlight has been the development of intra-arterial chemoradiotherapy for head-and-neck cancer combined with forward photon intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) in the early 1990s. The first successes, which came in treating large tumours whilst sparing the salivary gland, and seeing that the method actually worked, were very motivating.

Second was involvement in the first use of the cone beam in humans; developing a lively research community at the department and realising that it surpasses you.

Finally, starting the Advanced Technologies Course for Asia and observing the incredible energy of the participants. Years later the next gen comes along and you realise that they have actually implemented what you said years ago.

What is your next challenge?

It's preparing eye melanoma proton treatment for the next decade.

What do you think are the next challenges for radiation oncologists?

Immense, as are the possibilities.

What does this award mean to you?

Fun, although I am not a physicist and never will be; physics in radiotherapy always had my sincere interest. I tried to bring both medicine and physics forward. Being awarded makes me feel there was some kind of success.

To whom would you like to dedicate your award?

Ben Mijneer (clinical physicist at The Netherlands Cancer Institute, Amsterdam, The Netherlands).

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

Mainly in teaching and of course the ESTRO faculty ☺. I started teaching as a resident in the ESTRO IMRT course that was run by Mijnheer and have remained involved in ESTRO teaching ever since.

What started your interest in science?

My study in environmental health at the University of Amsterdam. At the time this was a very new and exciting field with loads to discover.

Did your parents encourage you in your career, or would they rather you had done something else?

My parents certainly encouraged me to study. They questioned my choice of medicine and would rather have me study law. Therefore I chose medicine.

What are you proudest of in your career?

Helping people to do more than they imagined they could and sometimes succeeding in helping them achieve just that.

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

An inventor.

What do you do in your spare time?

I weld and restore classic cars and restore audio equipment.

When do you think you will retire, and what would you like to do then?

I will retire at retirement age, and I have no clue what I will do next as it is likely to change.

