



# CONFERENCES

## Lifetime achievement award



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### *What have been the highlights of your career?*

Versatility. I have been a scientist in muscle physiology, working in a research lab as a medical student; then I trained as an internist with two busy years in an intensive care unit. Much adrenalin. Then I switched to oncology at the end of my internist curriculum. One year later, I was asked to join the radiotherapy department of our university hospital and started a new four-year internship. I went to Institut Gustave Roussy in Villejuif, near Paris (France), for one year and then I spent two years at the Katholieke Universiteit (KU) Leuven with the late Emmanuel van der Schueren, my true mentor. The office of the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) was in Leuven at the time and they appointed me as secretary in 1992.

### *What is your next challenge?*

To succeed in a new career as a retired doctor. The first two years are very promising: cooking, travelling in my small camper van, helping my wife who is still professionally active, ironing, and caring for grandchildren. This has been already a success. Then I volunteered in an association that fights poverty (ATD Fourth World), which keeps me pretty busy, and for 25 years I have been president of an association that manages a foster home for children who cannot live with their natural families (violence, prison, addiction, psychiatric troubles, extreme poverty).

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

Quality, quality, quality and safety.

### *What does this award mean to you?*

As the award says, the work has been lifelong.

### *To whom would you like to dedicate your award?*

To Emmanuel van der Schueren, who taught me kindness, precision, honesty, respect and so many other values, and who gave me opportunities to put these values into action within ESTRO.

### *What has been your involvement in ESTRO?*

I was secretary for six or seven years (not sure), then administrator when the office moved to Brussels and grew to a staff of 15 people; I have therefore been a board member for a long, long time. I led the quality management task force in 1995 and never stopped investing my energy in the promotion of quality and safety.

## ***What started your interest in science?***

When I was a year old, I wanted to know how a bottle of milk was made. I never stopped asking myself all sorts of questions. Then in the research lab I discovered that you could make a career of it...

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

A man is an engineer or nobody, said my father. So when I announced that I wanted to be a doctor, he raised an eyebrow and said: "What an exotic choice!" He felt like a chicken brooding a duck. But then he always showed lots of interest in what I was doing, since he was a nuclear engineer and I was a radiation oncologist, so ionising radiation was our business.

## ***What are you most proud of in your career?***

The formation of a national network for clinical audits in Belgium that is based on the International Atomic Energy Agency's quality assurance team for radiation oncology (QUATRO).

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

An architect. Possibly a chef or cook. And a better father too, because this bloody job kept me away from my family for much too long a time.

## ***What do you do in your spare time?***

Read above and then add Chinese painting, making lots of friends, woodwork, biking and much more.

