



CONFERENCES

Lifetime achievement award



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What have been the highlights of your career?

One is training in radiation therapy at MD Anderson Hospital, Houston, and in Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston. Another is the conduct and publication by our group of the first randomised trial that compared preoperative short-term radiotherapy in rectal cancer with chemoradiotherapy.

What is your next challenge?

My colleagues and I have just started a phase II observational study on non-operative management of rectal cancer that uses a typical pre-operative dose of external beam radiochemotherapy combined with an endorectal high-dose-rate brachytherapy boost. Patients with small, low-lying tumours are eligible for the study. Many of them do not require routine preoperative radiotherapy, e.g. those with cT2N0 disease. Our goal is to increase the complete clinical response (cCR) rate from the 30% that is usually achieved after routine preoperative radiotherapy to 70% by adding a brachytherapy boost dose. In addition, we aim to reduce the rate of regrowth in patients with cCR who undergo the watch-and-wait strategy from 25% to 30% (which is usually seen after routine preoperative radiotherapy) to 15%. This means that of the patients in our trial, approximately 50% will experience sustained cCR (winners), but another 50% (those with partial clinical response or with regrowth after cCR) will receive radical surgery. Thus, the latter patients (losers) will receive unnecessary preoperative radiotherapy or brachytherapy, which involve inherent early and late complications. The challenge is how we should measure the harm-benefit ratio for the entire cohort of patients enrolled in this study; i.e., how can the benefits of the winners be compared with the harms of the losers?

What does this award mean to you?

I feel honoured. This award proves that my scientific activity has been noticed and appreciated in the international arena. It reassures me that my efforts have been worthwhile.

To whom would you like to dedicate your award?

I would like to dedicate this award to my masters: Professors Andrzej Hliniński and Marek Nowacki from Poland, Herman Suit from Boston and Bengt Glimelius from Uppsala.

What are you proudest of in your career?

Conducting and publishing three multicentre randomised trials.