



# CONFERENCES

## ctRO poster award

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

I was so surprised to be nominated for the Clinical and Translational Radiation Oncology (ctRO) journal award. I didn't even know about the awards. I could never have imagined that I would have won it. It's a massive honour to be recognised by the committee of the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) for the hard work and the research that we have conducted over the last seven years. I think it is a great lesson, that no matter where you come from, or how small you think your contribution is, if you work hard, with integrity, and for the right reasons, you can make a difference. I think that sums up what the award has taught me and what it means to me. I am very humbled and very grateful for this privilege.

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

The poster is on the results of our Phase III randomised controlled trial on the use of a novel heating technology, modulated electro-hyperthermia, combined with chemoradiotherapy, for the management of high-risk, locally advanced cervical cancer patients in a resource-constrained setting in South Africa. We have previously reported on local disease control, safety and toxicity, and quality of life, and presented two and three years survival results in this presentation. I would therefore like to dedicate the award to the patients who participated in the study. Without them this would not be possible. I have learnt, and continue to learn, so much from them. They show fierce courage and faith in spite of the hardships that they face on a daily basis, which are not just with regard to the cancer and the treatments, but also poverty and their personal struggles and losses in incredibly strenuous and sometimes violent living conditions. They are truly inspiring. That these women get up every day with strength and love and grace and care for their families and communities, without complaining, while dealing with cancer, is something quite phenomenal to witness.

### *What are you proudest of in your career?*

The highlight was definitely being awarded my PhD. I worked hard for it under very difficult circumstances and it was a great personal and academic challenge.

### *What is your next challenge?*

The next challenge is another phase III study on modulated electro-hyperthermia. Large studies are always difficult, and in under-resourced settings the teams are small, the workload is high and the funding is very limited. The technology holds great promise,

especially in our setting, where availability of treatments is determined by costs, and not by outcomes, so we believe the challenge is worth it. We have made mistakes and learnt a lot from the cervix trial, so we know what to improve on next time around.

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

Coming from a resource-constrained setting, our biggest challenge is figuring out how we can include the latest, more expensive treatments in our workplace. It is a real concern that the latest technologies and drugs in oncology are so expensive that low-to-middle-income countries will be unable to provide these treatments to patients, and outcomes in these regions are likely to remain poor.

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

I have attended almost every ESTRO annual congress since 2018. It's not always easy travelling from South Africa, but when I have managed, it is definitely worth it for the science and academic updates. I have also attended some of the ESTRO workshops. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from the ESTRO community.

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

My parents are incredible, they would support me no matter what I decided to do, but they are very proud of my choices. I wouldn't be where I am without their support.

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

I think I've always been inclined towards the sciences, although as a child I wanted to be a firefighter for a while.

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

I enjoy physical as well as mental challenges. I think it is very important to find a balance, although it's often difficult when work is demanding and sometimes hobbies must take a back seat. But I try to do something physical every day. I lift weights, and at weekends I enjoy being outdoors and rock climbing. I also do jiu-jitsu and I box.

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

I don't think I will ever retire; I'm not very good without a challenge or a project. I don't think that will change. The nature or intensity of the work might change, though, as I get older.

