



SCHOOL

Course report

IMRT/VMAT and other highly conformal techniques in practice

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Course director:

- Mischa Hoogeman, medical physicist, Erasmus Medical Center Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Co-chair:

- Carmen Rubio, radiation oncologist, Hospital Universitario HM Sanchinarro, Madrid, Spain

A radiation oncologist's perspective:

Could you please briefly introduce yourself?

My name is Mariam Tchiabrishvili. I am a radiation oncologist in my first year of work at Todua Clinic, Tbilisi, Georgia, after I finished my training as a resident. Radiation oncology in all its directions and branches is very interesting to me, but my specific spheres of interest are prostate and, head and neck (H&N) cancers.

Why did you choose to attend this course?

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this course. It covered the main aspects of the latest advances in radiation therapy, which is one of the key issues for radiation oncologists. It was exceptionally impressive to me that a significant portion of the course was devoted to H&N and prostate tumours. The course also included issues of medical physics, which are very important for a radiation oncologist; all these aspects together affect the quality of the patient's treatment.

What aspects of the course were most interesting to you and why?

Although the whole course with all its activities was very interesting and informative for me, I would like to emphasise the clinical part of the programme. For me, as a novice physician, it was crucial that it reinforce features of the treatment process such as delineation, definition of target volumes, planning, toxicity management and the setting of priorities during the selection of the final plan for the treatment.

Did the course activities improve your knowledge and skills in the relevant subject?

Definitely. We were encouraged to take part in the discussions at the end of each session, so for us, it was a great opportunity to communicate with experts and to discuss all the major problems that arise in our daily practice. I found it very rewarding that the staff shared their knowledge and experience because often it is difficult to find direct answers to the challenges that arise during the treatment of our patients. Communication with the other participants was also productive and impressive. It was fascinating to discuss various problems and the differences among various guidelines and protocols.

Did your course meet your expectations? If so, how?

Yes, the course met and exceeded my expectations. Especially, I would like to highlight the part that was dedicated to the prostate and H&N cancers, as I found answers to a variety of questions that arise during the planning and delivery of radiotherapy. It has encouraged me to be more courageous and confident despite my limited inexperience.

List three important takeaways following the course.

- Full communication between team members (the radiation oncologist, medical physicist and radiation therapy technician) and patients is always paramount.
- The treatment should be decided by a multidisciplinary team.
- It is crucial that the guidelines be followed; however, each patient's case should be reviewed individually and decisions should be made based on the risks and benefits of the treatment for that patient.

How will what you have learned be implemented in your daily clinical practice?

I plan to use stereotactic body radiotherapy and hypofractionation to treat prostate cancer in the future, as the advantages of this method were very clear during the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) course. In the case of H&N tumours, early toxicity of the treatment is a serious problem and we often have to discontinue treatment due to severe side-effects. The way to solve this problem is to try all the possible methods to reduce the dose to critical organs and shorten the duration of the treatment while maintaining the local control and efficiency of the treatment against the tumour. During the course, the use of intensity-modulated radiotherapy with simultaneously integrated boosts (IMRT SIB) to treat H&N cancers was discussed in this context.

How would you encourage someone who has never been to an ESTRO course to join this course?

ESTRO courses enhance knowledge and skills, but in addition, they offer ideal opportunities to build relationships with colleagues from different countries and thus to learn more about individual and country-specific protocols. In my opinion, the existence of such courses is beneficial because we are able to share experiences and use the gained knowledge for the benefit of our patients.



Mariam Tchiabrishvili, MD
Radiation Oncologist
Department of Radiation Oncology
Todua Clinic
Tbilisi, Georgia
mariamtchiabrishvili@yahoo.com