



SCHOOL

Course Report

Multidisciplinary Management of Breast Cancer

10-13 October 2021, Brussels, Belgium

Course director:

Philip Poortmans, radiation oncologist, Iridium Netwerk and University of Antwerp (Belgium)

A radiographer's perspective:

My name is Peter Pagh Schultz. I am a radiographer working as a dosimetrist at Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark. My field of work is specifically radiotherapy of breast cancer, in which I make treatment plans and delineate target volumes and normal tissue.

I and my colleague Marianne Bessermann were encouraged by Professor Birgitte Vrou Offersen to participate in the multidisciplinary management of breast cancer course, which is run by the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO). She felt that the course was relevant to us as the curriculum covered many aspects of our work. We agreed, and were not disappointed.

As I work solely in radiotherapy, I am focused on the delineation of structure volumes and dose distribution in radiation oncology. There were several sessions that covered these topics.

The multidisciplinary faculty led by Professor Philip Poortmans presented to us relevant clinical studies and clinical cases as well as insight into their own clinical practices. The use of a voting tool on clinical cases was a great way to create interaction between the participants and the faculty. It forced us to try hard to understand the material presented to us. It was an intense course that entailed long days of work and many topics were covered each day.

Prior to the course, all participants were asked to delineate three cases. During the course our delineations were compared with those made by the teachers and discussed. There were huge differences but I found that my delineations matched the expert delineations in many aspects. The experts' approaches seemed purposely to exclude more tissue from the target volumes in low-risk areas or far from the tumour sites. It was interesting to see that delineation within the same ESTRO guidelines could produce quite different outcomes. It was therefore useful to discuss openly what was right or wrong, or even just different approaches to these tasks.

When the topic switched to dose planning I was happily surprised to see that our technique was not completely different from those of others. I feared that our technique, which involved tangents and intensity-modulated radiation therapy, would be out of date. My take-home from this was that arc therapy is relevant and necessary as a secondary option for special cases.

I also found it very interesting and useful to see surgery, chemotherapy and immunotherapy presented in this multidisciplinary context. I gained knowledge from these presentations, especially about the timing of surgery and the chosen technique, and the impact these factors could have on localisation of the tumour bed in radiotherapy and the resulting toxicity of the treatment.

I understood from the presentations that current treatment techniques are so effective that clinical studies show that we are over-treating some patients. It is difficult to figure out both who they are and the level of treatment that is necessary to treat them adequately. The faculty members all explained to us the different ways in which they approached this de-escalation of treatment.

I learned that the importance of standards of practice and good cooperation between specialities cannot be understated. I will take a good look at our clinical practice to see if there are some aspects of our teamwork with other specialities that can be improved. We will also attempt to implement arc therapy in certain aspects of our breast radiotherapy, starting with palliative treatment.

The course definitely gave me a better understanding of the treatment of breast cancer as a whole. Most importantly, I learned what was considered important for a good outcome. This helps me a great deal in my daily work as we can tend to focus too much

on things that do not matter in the whole scheme of things. I would definitely tell this to people if I were to describe why I would recommend they attend this course.



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