



ESTRO 2023

From Innovation to Action

12-16 May 2023 | Vienna, Austria

## ESTRO 2023 Young Track Report

### *“Speed dating”*

The Monday of ESTRO 2023 brought a triumph for the ESTRO young track, with a series of inspiring and engaging sessions that encouraged attendees to think outside the box. Foremost among these was the speed-dating event. Despite being held early in the morning on the penultimate day of the conference, this session succeeded in pulling together a room full of people from different countries, professional backgrounds, ages and stages of their careers and getting them to engage with each other. The session enabled a large number of discussions in which I heard about PhD projects, clinical aspirations, professional development and career progression from physicists, radiation therapists (RTTs) and clinicians.

This session easily met its objective of building interprofessional and international relations and then exceeded it by inspiring the attendees to develop further their careers and practice. It fostered a greater appreciation of our wider radiotherapy community and encouraged us to take a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to our working lives.

### *“Optimal health for all, together – looking ahead, what do staff and patients need to achieve this?”*

The offering at this session varied from those available at most sessions at ESTRO 2023. Instead of focusing on the technical and medical aspects of radiotherapy and oncology, this session focused on challenging its audience to look at themselves and their practice and truly change how they approached their professions.

The first talk by Dr Philip Poortmans explored the importance of mentorship and how we can support each other in professional development. It explored what being a mentor meant and what it involved, and then challenged the traditional assumptions that a mentor would be a direct senior of the mentee, instead showing that anyone could mentor irrespective of role or institution as long as they had compatible approaches and experience. It also explored how a well-balanced mentorship interaction could benefit both the mentor and mentee in a setting of respectful discussion and challenging of ideas. It could also identify potential future co-workers. This talk synergised well with the preceding discussion of the excellent ESTRO mentorship programme, in which successful applicants can be paired with the best mentor for them to assist in their career growth and development.

The second talk of this session was delivered by RTT professor Heidi Probst and was easily the most emotive and moving talk at ESTRO 2023. This session explored the personal journey of an RTT who had spent decades of her career focusing on the advancement of care and treatment for breast cancer and then faced a personal journey with breast cancer treatment. She went through surgery, chemotherapy and finally radiotherapy. Professor Probst held nothing back in her delivery regarding this raw experience; she laid bare all the complexities and nuances of both the technical and personal implications. This was made all the more impactful by the inclusion of personal photos from the various stages of treatment. Many in the audience were moved to tears by the tale of the impact that the diagnosis, treatment and side-effects had on this professional and her family. Ultimately her radiotherapy was delivered by two of her former students. This talk showed how all of us, no matter how long we have worked in cancer care, have something to learn and can always gain a new perspective that can lead us to better our patient care. This talk was a credit to Professor Probst and her bravery in sharing her story with this conference.



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