

ESTRO is organising one workshop on 27 January 2017, at ECCO2017 in Amsterdam. In this section the organiser will give some insight about the programme.

Communication in oncology

Workshop at ECCO2017

Interview with Jesper Eriksen, co-organiser

It's the first time ESTRO has organised a workshop on communication. What has pushed you to do this?

The reason why we created this is that communication is a cornerstone in cancer treatment. No cancer treatment will function without appropriate communication. The ESTRO School would like to cover all the seven competences of healthcare professionals and we are quite good at covering most of these fields today, but communication is the one we have never touched until now. That's why we thought it was so important in the multidisciplinary setting of ECCO2017 to try to make an educational workshop on the topic. Communications are extremely important in health care in general, but in cancer treatment and cancer care it is an area that is especially important. We have received demands from within our environment, but there is also the increasing focus on communication and increasing expectations that doctors are able to communicate properly with patients, with colleagues and with all the different stakeholders within the treatment process.

So does that mean that it is an initiative from the ESTRO School?

It isn't an initiative from the ESTRO School but it is a proposal from the ESTRO School. We have wanted to organise a course on the topic for many years so the whole idea is that if this turns out to be a positive experience, then we will try to see if an educational activity on communication could fall into the portfolio of the ESTRO courses. However, we would do it in the workshop format to preserve interactivity.

What is the concept of the workshop?

The idea of the workshop is to limit it to a few people. We expect there would be room for around 50 people, which is already quite a lot. We would like to have various profiles, but it will be very interactive. We will have small theoretical sessions and then exercises where people are placed in small groups at round tables. They will work together with facilitation from the faculty. After this small session there would be another theoretical session, and then back and forth all the time to mix theory with participants' own experience and to develop their experience within a small group. The room will not be a normal auditorium but round tables for six to eight people sitting together and having these very interactive group discussions. This kind of interaction with theoretical teaching and with workshops is a very nice and very efficient way to evolve areas that are not just about knowledge, but also about attitudes and competences.

So it's quite a new concept compared to what we normally do in courses at the ESTRO School. It is certainly out of the box.

What will the learning outcomes be?

The learning outcomes will be to gather food for thought on how to develop participants' own way of communicating with patients, so there are some clear official learning outcomes. But the

workshop is also for participants to push themselves a bit and give themselves new ideas and food for thought on how to make their communication more effective and get the message across to the patients in a better way. Not just when breaking bad news, but also in general. It is not a course in breaking bad news, but it is a course in how to communicate effectively.

What about the teachers?

Pal Gulbrandsen, the course director, is professor in medical communication at Oslo University. He was originally a GP, but has a long-standing research career in medical communication. With him will be two oncologists, Soren Cold from Denmark and Robert Glynne-Jones from the UK. Both of them have been involved in medical communication among oncologists for many years.

Who should attend?

Communication does not just involve doctor / patient communication, but all the different stakeholders in cancer treatment. And the chain is no stronger than its weakest link. This is for all different stakeholders in cancer treatment: it is for the radiation oncologist, the medical oncologist, the surgical oncologist, radiation therapists, nurses, and actually this is also open to patients, legal stakeholders and patient organisations that participate in the ECCO meeting. Of course, we expect that doctors and nurses would form the majority at this event, but, in principle, it is open to everybody because communication is something that concerns a lot of stakeholders.