



2013 ESTRO Membership

In 2013 there will be some important changes to the categories of ESTRO Membership to better serve the needs of all those working in Radiation Oncology

Interview with Dirk Verellen, ESTRO Membership Officer



Dirk Verellen

Why has it been decided to change the types of membership?

The membership categories required a major revision as they did not represent the Society of today and were also unnecessarily complicated and difficult to keep track of. The incentive for changing the categories was to ensure that ESTRO membership properly reflects the services that members expect, bearing in mind their different profiles and professional background. We were also aware, from our review of data from 2009-2011, that the membership retention rate fell to 75% and 62% after one and two years respectively, indicating a significant group of short-term members. We wanted to provide a more attractive membership and encourage a long-term commitment. In short, we needed a membership strategy that would reflect the services provided by the Society to the different sections of the radiotherapy community. Our aim was to put in place a structure and provide benefits so that professionals in radiotherapy would not need to question why they should become an active member of ESTRO - it would be the obvious thing to do.

The changes that have been made fit well with the new ESTRO strategy of a member-centered society. With improved services for the individual, more efficient tools for communication between members and a strong basis for life long education and professional development, we hope we have achieved our aim. It was a challenging exercise to ensure compatibility with the new business plan: reducing membership fees to make membership more attractive is one thing, maintaining a healthy Society quite another.

What are the major changes to the current categories of membership?

One major development is the introduction of "Institutional Membership". This

category is designed to assist hospitals and centres committed to providing radiotherapy and oncology to develop and support their professional staff. I would like to draw your attention to the word "professionals" here. This is a collective membership to promote representation of the radiotherapy team as a whole, so that they become active within the Society. The idea is to create an incentive or opportunity for all professionals in the department to be represented in ESTRO. In effect, a centre can acquire a package membership provided that all professionals are included. Typically, a centre could acquire a package for 5, 10, 20 etc. members, at a very attractive fee.

Are there any other changes?

For those individuals committed to the Society there will be three levels of membership, roughly reflecting the career pathway of a radiotherapy professional: "In Training", "Active Member" and "Supporting Ambassador", with a substantial reduction in the membership fee for the first two of these categories compared to the current system. These categories will benefit from all the existing and new services provided by ESTRO (e.g. new communication tools to facilitate networking and collaboration, on-line services, reduced fees for ESTRO events and education). I will explain a little more about the category "Supporting Ambassador" further on in this interview. Another interesting category is "Affiliate" member, which is for those professionals who are not currently interested in becoming an active member of the Society, but would like to benefit from some of the services offered by ESTRO (e.g. access to the Green Journal and attending an ESTRO event or course on an irregular basis for a reduced fee). Finally, there will be the "Honorary", "Dual" (i.e. joint memberships with other societies) and "Corporate Representative"



ESTRO MEMBERSHIP RUNS FROM
THE 1ST OF JANUARY
TO THE 31ST OF DECEMBER

categories of membership, each with their particular emphasis and benefits.

How will these changes help to strengthen ESTRO membership and better reflect the needs of different members of the ESTRO community?

The membership categories will be more representative of the needs of individuals and the services that they want. If someone is not particularly eager to be an active member of the Society, but wants to participate in the Annual Meeting and have access to the Green Journal, "Affiliate Member" may be sufficient. On the other hand, for someone who wants to actively participate in the Society, "Active Member" is the obvious choice to build a long-term commitment. The "Institutional Membership" will be a strong incentive to encourage broad representation of all professionals in radiotherapy to participate in the Society.

What were the most important benefits that have been retained from the current system?

We started from the existing strengths of

ESTRO membership, being the Green Journal and incentives to participate in ESTRO events and courses by offering reduced registration fees. These benefits have been left untouched for all membership categories as they have always been the backbone of the Society.

How does being an ESTRO member help in daily practice?

The new communication tools and on-line services create a personalised platform to help ESTRO members connect and network. Moreover, ESTRO members will find an environment that will stimulate education and development. As such the new membership categories will be an important part of the strategy of realising the central vision statement of ESTRO by offering the necessary tools for the individual member to develop his or her professional skills in the interests of our patients.

Will the new approach to membership be particularly attractive to some groups of members?

It is clear that the Society needs to invest in our Young Members facilitating network-

ing and education. Special care has been given to this important group through both the "In Training" and "Institutional" membership categories. The future of our Society can only be safeguarded by supporting our young members.

Is there any help with the subscriptions for those working in countries with financial restrictions?

This brings me to the special category of "Supporting Ambassador". This category is aimed at individuals who are strongly committed to the Society and want to take this extra step to help ESTRO grow. The additional fee provided by these members will be used to create a fund to sponsor individual membership and provide support grants for ESTRO events. As such we can, for example, ensure participation from those countries that need additional support. ■