



Report on the 7th ICHNO conference

The seventh International Congress on Innovative Approaches in Head and Neck Oncology (ICHNO) took place in March 2019 in the beautiful city of Barcelona, Spain. It was led by Professors Johannes A Langendijk (ESTRO), C René Leemans (European Head and Neck Society) and Jean-Pascal Machiels (European Society for Medical Oncology) and brought together physicians and researchers from all the specialties involved in the treatment of head and neck cancer patients. This included surgeons, radiation oncologists and medical oncologists, as well as statisticians, epidemiologists, physicists, pathologists and biologists. The meeting clearly demonstrated the importance of interdisciplinary working between the different specialties. It featured several keynote lectures:

- The two opening lectures set the scene with Ruud Brakenhoff, The Netherlands, discussing 'New insights into the molecular landscape' and Sven Brandau, Essen, Germany, delivering a lecture entitled '*Into the immune landscape of head and neck cancer*'. These two lectures illustrated the importance of biology, immunology and the interaction between physicians and translational scientists, especially with the advent of immunotherapies. Another keynote, by Alessandro Franchi, Italy, also explored translational issues, focusing on sinonasal undifferentiated carcinomas and their pathological and molecular definition.
- Brian O'Sullivan, Canada, discussed how the eighth edition of the TNM staging system has been integrated into clinical routine, and its forthcoming refinements. His lecture raised a number of questions: What should we do with the pTNM system for p16-positive cancers? Should we include tobacco smoking in the squamous cell system or Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) DNA in the nasopharyngeal system?
- Two more keynotes provided fascinating perspectives on the future of our specialties. Christian Simon, Switzerland, discussed advances in robotic surgery and David Fuller, USA, explored the role of imaging in head and neck oncology and radiotherapy.

The congress also featured three proffered papers sessions, one poster discussion session, and updates on practice-changing clinical trials. Barbara Burtness, USA, presented an update on the Keynote-048 trial, which evaluated the role of pembrolizumab in first line recurrent/metastatic head and neck cancer, while Hisham Mehanna, UK, presented the

latest analyses of the De-ESCALaTE trial, which compared cisplatin to cetuximab for p16-positive oropharyngeal cancers.

Interactive sessions were a key feature of the meeting, with an interactive tumour board and two very lively debates. In the first, Vincent Grégoire faced Philippe Lambin on the issue of the clinical applicability of radiomics. Although the audience was initially sceptical on the relevance of radiomics as it stands today, at the end of the debate the majority was convinced that it would play an important role in the future. Sandrine Faivre and Kevin Harrington were the contestants in the second debate, which discussed whether chemotherapy will be replaced by immunotherapy in the coming years. After an exhilarating start from Kevin Harrington comparing the end of chemotherapy (Chexit) to the current Brexit situation, the two debaters presented very strong data, and eventually convinced the audience that the role of chemotherapy is likely to be reduced in the coming years.

The congress featured four symposia on new concepts and techniques in radiotherapy, surgery, immuno-oncology and survivorship. In the last, guidelines for survivorship care were presented and discussed with the audience and a patient, which provided one of the most interesting and moving sessions in the congress. The radiotherapy symposium also provided an opportunity to introduce the discovery of a new major salivary gland, which for me was one of the highlights of the meeting. In an interesting and entertaining talk, Wouter Vogel, The Netherlands, described this new major salivary gland, discovered through the reading of prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA) PET-scans performed for prostate cancer staging. This new structure was then studied in cadavers, with further imaging, and then contoured. A dose/xerostomia relationship was also found. In the end, the structure received a new name, the tubarial gland. It is fascinating to see that even the anatomy is a field that is impacted by new techniques and imaging.

Overall, this meeting was very lively, with lots of interaction, and full of good science. We have all saved the date for the eighth edition of ICHNO, set to take place in two years, again in Barcelona.

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