



SCHOOL

'Foundation of Leadership in Radiation Oncology' course

Milan, Italy

It was a great learning experience to attend and actively participate in the 'Foundation of Leadership in Radiation Oncology' course held at the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology meeting (ESTRO38) in Milan, Italy. I congratulate the organisers for their design of an extraordinary sequence of interactive presentations and group exercises that were aimed towards different aspects of leadership for radiation-oncology practice. The participants were medical physicists and radiation therapy technologists as well as clinicians, which enabled all personnel to have equal opportunity to take part in development of quality patient-centred practice.

A personal statement was required to apply for this course, which I believe was the first step to engage the participants with the organising faculty. Learning objectives mentioned in the personal statements along with the pre-course mandatory 'insights' profiling questionnaire must have provided the faculty with a flavour of the course participants. This meant that they could tailor the course to the educational needs of the audience, and these needs were very appropriately addressed during various sessions.

The 'Insights' session was the hallmark of this course for me. It helped individuals not only to recognise their own qualities in dealing with different situations, but also to identify and understand different personality-type preferences. The interactive group exercise helped us to appreciate the qualities of different kinds of people and to learn how to benefit from them when working in a team that acknowledged each other's different traits.

The alumni event in the evening and 'communicating vision' sessions were held in the 'stage' area, which was itself a new and innovative addition to the ESTRO conference. The event brought people together to share the impact of learning from previous leadership courses and future aspirations to implement the learning in practice. I was lucky to get a chance to share my ideas and was well appreciated with some valuable feedback from the faculty and attendees.

I belong to a radiation oncology culture in which learning managerial skills is emphasised but is not offered in a formal or complete manner. Therefore I found it valuable to participate in this foundation of leadership course. I am eager to share what I learned from this course with my colleagues in Pakistan. This will provide me with an opportunity to transfer some knowledge to my colleagues, and encourage them to participate in teaching and learning activities related to leadership skills. The knowledge I have gained is proving fruitful as I have been able to apply it in some of the ventures of my institute, such as addressing recent machine breakdowns and tackling a long waiting list for radiation therapy.

I thoroughly enjoyed all the course content and interaction with the teaching faculty, whom I found to be very pragmatic in their guidance and answers to queries. The major contributing factor to the success of this activity was the experience already gained and contributions made by the course teachers to radiation oncology in Canada, Europe and Australia, both in managerial and clinical domains. The teachers were members of the Canadian Association of Radiation Oncology, ESTRO and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists. I wish we had been able to find more time to hear from the teachers, especially about change management, visioning and team communication, and quality-improvement strategies. I hope more such courses are organised in future by the Society to benefit young leaders in radiation oncology, especially in developing countries.



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