



SCHOOL

Combined Drug-Radiation Treatment: Biological Basis, Current Applications and Perspectives

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Course Director

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This year, the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) course on combined drug-radiation treatment was held in Seoul, South Korea. Through the continued efforts of the Korean and Japanese radiation oncology societies (KOSRO and JASTRO) with ESTRO, this was a wonderful way for participants in Asia to meet experts who had extensive hands-on experience and knowledge from their fields of expertise. It can be difficult for those in countries in the eastern part of the world, including me, to participate in the ESTRO teaching course, which is held in Europe.

I finished my residency at the Yonsei Cancer Center in 2014. My first experience of an ESTRO teaching course was in my fourth year of radiation-oncology training, in stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT) in Lille, France. Since then, I have tried to attend as many ESTRO teaching courses as possible, on the subjects of: breast cancer in 2016 in Tokyo, Japan; gastrointestinal (GI) cancer in 2017 in Seoul, Korea; and magnetic resonance-based ICR in gynaecology in 2018, Madrid, Spain.

There are multiple reasons why I try to participate in ESTRO teaching courses. Every time I have finished a course, I feel that I have increased my value and knowledge in the field so that I can treat my patients in the same manner as the experts do. Some things cannot be learned by reading a high-impact journal or classical textbooks. The special feature of a teaching course is the interaction and practical nature of the teaching. I now work as a physician who treats, on average, 10-20 new patients each week with breast cancer, melanoma, rectal cancer and some cancers that require SBRT. In addition, I treat some patients with gynaecological issues at the Yonsei Cancer Center, which has 12 linear particle accelerator (LINAC) machines (six volumetric modulated arc therapy (VMAT) machines, five helical tomotherapy machines and 1 CyberKnife™). I can say with confidence that experience gained through ESTRO teaching courses has been of great help to me both in the clinic and for research.

The ESTRO teaching course offers a practical and comprehensive overview. There is a stark difference between these courses and international conferences or symposia, which provide up-to-date information but in a fragmented, piecemeal form, which can be difficult to understand and apply in a practical way. In that sense, considering that the most important element for participants in these courses may be asking questions and sharing their thoughts, ESTRO teaching courses in Asia are slightly different from courses held in Europe. This is because students in East Asia rarely speak in the classroom; instead, they tend to listen in silence and ponder afterwards. Much is changing in South Korea, but I encourage participants in courses held in Asia in the future to speak out more and ask more questions, so that researchers can supply more information and knowledge to us.

I would like to thank all the researchers who delivered enthusiastic lectures over the three-day course. Special thanks go to Dr Rob Glynn-Jones, who gave me personal tips regarding the treatment of patients when I described my challenging cases to him after classes. I strongly recommend not only this course but also other ESTRO courses to all potential participants, to broaden our understanding of the field of radiation therapy. In addition, I am planning to attend another ESTRO teaching course next year with great expectations and the hope of meeting you there.



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