



SCHOOL

Evidence-Based Radiation Oncology Course

24-29 June 2019

Montpellier, France

This year I had the opportunity to participate in a course run by the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO) for the first time, thanks to the kind recommendation of my mentor and supervisor, Dr Katarzyna Czyżewska. It is her belief that every specialist should attend an ESTRO course at least once a year.

Montpellier in France welcomed us with a beautiful and quintessentially French atmosphere. This is where one of the oldest Faculties of Medicine in Europe is located and is still in operation. Many participants took the opportunity to visit the famous Museum of Anatomy. The occurrence of the hottest day on record in France during our visit was a good incentive to appreciate six solid days of intensive lectures in air-conditioned halls.

The course was attended by approximately 60 participants from Europe, Asia, Australia and Canada. These figures speak to Montpellier's success in establishing itself as a premium centre for modern medical education. The exercises promoted interaction with colleagues who in their daily work encountered similar challenges and rewards of medicine. Such a format is very valuable, particularly for young doctors still in training.

The subject of evidence-based radiation oncology requires a solid scientific grounding and discipline of thought, as illustrated by the lectures of Professor Bernard Dubray. His teachings about statistical evidence, weight of proof, data analysis, and traps of probability versus wishful thinking were spot-on and a necessary reminder! The instruction to KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid) is still the best advice in any clinical or scientific endeavour, as confirmed by all the doctors in my family.

There were indeed many, many excellent lectures in this broad subject. Every participant could find something fascinating. For me, the lesson on neurological tumors by Dr Matt Williams was one of the best examples of clarity in this subject. His talk on palliative radiotherapy, which connects clinical humanism and modern technology, championed this underutilised branch of research, which is waiting to be explored by a new crop of scientists.

Professor Bernardino De Bari shared his 'detective' experiences with genito-urinary tumours and their appearance in research as compared with field practice.

Professor Youlia Kirova represented the Institute that is built on the legacy of the great Polish pioneer of radiation oncology and double Nobel Prize laureate Maria Skłodowska Curie. Professor Kirova systematically outlined many controversies around treatment of breast cancer and pointed towards emerging diagnostic options.

Dr Li Tee Tan was interested in our daily practice and built her lectures around our concerns, with the weight of her impressive experience.

Professor Gian Carlo Mattiucci presented us with recommendations for upper gastrointestinal cancer treatments after cases were discussed in smaller groups.

Professor Johannes Kaanders (who has taught generations of radiation oncologists) gave credit to the importance of obtaining a proper physical examination and health history. He reminded us that 'of all imaging methods, our own vision has the best resolution'. This was a useful reminder in the midst of all the technology available to doctors. His systematic lecture on head and neck cancer was very accessible and memorable. This phenomenal teacher also gave the best souvenirs (and the fans he offered were good fun in the hot weather).

I want to thank the education project manager, Miika Palmu, for the excellent organisation of this stimulating course, which offered a broad appeal both to world-class scholars and to young doctors in training, in a lovely setting.

I am looking forward to the next part of this course, which will be chaired by Professor Barbara Jereczek-Fossa. She was available in Montpellier to inspire participants as she passionately promoted the interconnection of clinical development and scientific research.

My participation in the course was sponsored by the Count Jakub Potocki Foundation, to which I send my thanks. Count Potocki in his will allocated his wealth to the fight against tuberculosis and cancer by means of promoting research and doctors' education. We are thankful that his legacy helps us to manage the first and pay close attention to the second.



Paweł Figarski

Polish Red Cross Maritime Hospital
Gdynia, Poland
Chair of Department of Physiology
Medical University of Gdańsk
Gdańsk, Poland