

Teachers Retreat - Educational needs in Europe and beyond for the next decennium

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Education is one of the main pillars at ESTRO and we took the opportunity of the London congress to organise a teachers' retreat, which was the first time such a meeting had taken place. It was very useful to bring together all the ESTRO teachers and provide the opportunity for them to discuss their experiences and the future of the courses. The participants were divided into small groups and each focussed on specific topics. You will find the outcome of their discussions below.

We thank them for their participation and as always, for their considerable dedication all year long!



From left to right: B. Jereczek-Fossa, C. Cottrill, J. W. Leer and V. van Egten



From left to right: F. Stewart, M. Joiner, A. Begg, M. van Vulpen, M. Lybeer, S. Rivera, M. Stam, R. de Jong



Sofia Rivera

" It was a real pleasure to meet so many ESTRO teachers, course directors, members of the FALCON team and people involved in ESTRO educational activities at the teachers retreat we had in London on the 7th and 8th of May. This new ESTRO initiative offered a great opportunity for exchange, in both serious and relaxing ways, between people involved in education within ESTRO.

Our working group had a brainstorming session on educational needs in Europe and beyond for the next decennium. We had a heterogeneous group from different teaching courses, origins and professions such as biologists, RTTs, physicists, radiation oncologists and surgeons, including three co-chairs: Jereczek Barbara (IT), Stewart Fiona (NL) and myself and 10 group members.

Our group came up with a lot of very interesting and constructive suggestions for new developments in the framework of the School and further improvements of the current activities. The three major priorities we brought up were:

- *The optimisation of ESTRO teaching courses*
- *The development of an internal exchange programme under the ESTRO umbrella*
- *The implementation of educational activities aiming at politicians, health economists and society in general.*

Teaching courses are already a strong pillar of educational activities in ESTRO and everyone was very happy with the quality and quantity already achieved. Nevertheless, we felt that for the next decennium we will have to work on important issues such as balance between live and online courses, defining areas where ESTRO has expertise, collaboration with non-ESTRO experts, expansion of courses and limitations to that, European educational homogenisation, balance between basic and continuous education, increasing the involvement of RTTs, developing topics (management and health economics), reinforcing multidisciplinary (new technologies, biology, anatomy and contouring...). An action plan still needs to be set up taking into account the evolution of educational needs and means.

Our second priority is to develop an internal exchange programme. Currently, the main

tools available in ESTRO to stimulate international practical exchanges are the Technology Transfer Grants (TTGs). These grants are aimed at covering a short period of travel and do not meet the needs of longer exchanges. The first step to answer this increasing need would be to create an informative platform on the ESTRO website to facilitate contacts between young people looking for international exchange and heads of departments willing to host them. The next step would be to develop a database of hosting institutions which could evolve into a real exchange programme with financial support and educational evaluation. The aim of this programme would be to reinforce practical experience and widen perspectives. This project needs important input from young, dedicated members, potential tutors, heads of department and the ESTRO educational team willing to set this up. The expected bonus for the participants in this programme would be to reinforce linguistic knowledge in English and a spirit of collaboration and participation into the (ESTRO) teaching programmes. The expected benefits for hosting institutions would be to improve their standards of care and education, to grant access to the best students and to increase their visibility. The added value for ESTRO would be to improve standards of care and education which is one of the main goals of our Society. Unfortunately we didn't have much time left to discuss in depth how we can develop larger educational activities within ESTRO, orientated to non-radiation oncology professionals. We certainly thought that this was one of the big issues for the coming years and therefore proposed to discuss it further.

Looking at the comments from the participants we can conclude that this retreat was very successful and I would strongly support it being repeated, at least on a biennial basis. ■

Sofia Rivera

Radiation Oncologist, Hospital Saint Louis, APHP, Paris, France
PhD student, INSERM 1030, Institut Gustave Roussy, Villejuif, France



David Sjöström

"I was very happy to participate in the so-called "ESTRO Teachers retreat" in connection with the 30th Anniversary conference in May. For the first time in ESTRO's history, all teachers were invited to a one-day retreat to meet fellow teachers from other courses to discuss ideas on education and strategies. About 75 teachers joined the retreat where we were divided into seven groups to discuss different topics. I joined the group discussion on "Educational tools and materials" led by Richard Poetter and Ann Barrett. The group brainstormed and highlighted some issues and needs such as:

- Control of the clinical delineation guidelines by having clinical experts reviewing the cases
- Purchase of an electronic polling system that can be used during the courses
- Involvement of the ESTRO School faculty in creating the text book for radiation oncologists
- How the ESTRO website can be improved to make it easier to share knowledge e.g. using the Wikipedia platform and Forums for the course participants
- How the course material and the course evaluation can be provided electronically

All proposals, in order of priority, were written down and are now in the safe hand of ESTRO who will review the suggestions of all the groups together. In the evening we were all invited on a boat cruise on the Thames where good wine and food was served. For me, this more informal activity really served its purpose, to network and share experiences with teachers from other courses. After the dinner we had a further chance to mingle to get to know each other. Some of us continued the meeting on the dance floor supported by a live band, while others stayed on deck to cool down and see attractions such as the London Eye, Tower Bridge and Big Ben. ■

David Sjöström

Physicist, University Hospital Herlev, Denmark



Vincent Khoo

" The Teacher's Retreat weekend was a great opportunity to renew friendships with old colleagues and meet new ones. It was very good to have overviews from our ETC Chair, Richard Pötter and Christine Verfaillie, Manager of the ESTRO School as to the progress and development of the ETC. It was astonishing to see the scope of the educational courses and future plans.

We were all allocated to small workgroups dealing with specific issues. For myself, it was the liaison between the European Institute of Radiotherapy and the ETC. This afternoon workshop was lively, challenging but above all, provided some very useful ideas for improved communication, methods for developing ideas and involvement for both our core teachers in the course and the general membership of ESTRO. Unfortunately, due to prior commitments, I was unable to attend the lovely riverboat cruise which I hear was one of the highlights of the weekend. I look forward to the next meeting and hopefully spending a relaxing evening with my colleagues. " ■

Vincent Khoo

Radiation Oncologist, Royal Marsden, London, United Kingdom



Marcel Stam

" For some of us the retreat started early by catching up on the underground, but for most it started at the conference centre, with a well appreciated update about developments within ESTRO, with special emphasis on the ESTRO School. Next we split up into six groups (consisting of physicists, radiation oncologists and RTTs) to discuss and advise ESTRO about future developments in (European) education. Our group focused on possible ways in which ESTRO could facilitate training in the "social" competencies as described in the three new core curricula. Medical expertise was not discussed since this competency is already broadly taken care of by the different ESTRO courses. We concluded that for most patient related communication, too much cultural diversity existed to be able to develop international training. Nevertheless, communication and collaboration between professionals and between trainer and trainee could very well be taken care of in a short teaching course (e.g. a pre-meeting workshop such as the one that took place at ESTRO 29, the Barcelona meeting in 2010). Also training in management skills and economics of radiotherapy (with special emphasis on logistics and cost/price calculations) were seen to be interesting teaching topics. A relative lack of interest in these workshops as compared to the more technical courses and workshops is anticipated. This could be resolved by involving the national societies closely with these workshops. This could then also give a boost to the implementation of the core curricula by the different national societies. " ■

Marcel Stam

Radiation Oncologist, ARTI - Arnhems RadioTherapy Inst., The Netherlands



Michael Joiner

" I was part of the e-Learning discussion group and we aimed, quite successfully I believe, to overview and explore which online interactions with students in the ESTRO School will add to the learning experience. Clearly, a major theme in this debate is how we can add online learning education to our face-to-face courses. E-learning is definitely seen as a positive supplement to our regular courses, and may be particularly valuable in disseminating basic knowledge and providing databases and online textbooks, which can be updated more frequently than the printed copy. We are actively embracing this technology to improve the learning experience. However, we also agree that there is no substitute for being able to discuss advanced material face-to-face with experts. Our overall conclusion is that we are not disbanding our regular courses in the foreseeable future!

This first ESTRO teachers retreat was a valuable meeting, because of the opportunity to meet socially with many fellow teachers and share experiences, but also because it allowed us all to discuss the continuing evolution of the ESTRO School, which is tremendously important because of its growing role in all the facets of radiation oncology education, both inside and outside Europe. Clearly there is a very positive role for electronic learning and communications into our future. " ■

Michael Joiner

Biologist, Wayne State University, Detroit, USA



Maria Mania Aspridakis

" ESTRO organises on average 32 educational courses per year and about 200 teachers (radiation oncologists, physicists, radiobiologists and RTTs) contribute to these. This year, over the weekend prior to the annual meeting in London, about 40% of the ESTRO teaching faculty was able to attend the first ESTRO Teachers' Retreat. The time during the retreat was primarily allocated to discussions on six themes that were identified in advance by the ESTRO Education and Training Committee (ETC). Teachers, based on their preference in terms of theme, were divided into six groups. Each group spent Saturday afternoon discussing the current status, identifying priorities, actions and goals for ways forward, expected outcomes as well as also possible threats to achieving results on a particular theme. A summary of this brainstorming was presented by group leaders to all participants on the Sunday morning before the end of the retreat.

The topics on which teachers elaborated were either directly linked or closely related to the mission of ESTRO's School:

1. Educational needs in Europe and beyond for the next decennium
2. Educational tools and materials
3. ESTRO e-learning and collaboration with other e-learning groups
4. New European Core Curricula (CC) - Should ESTRO develop social competency oriented teaching/training? Coverage of the European CC through ESTRO courses
5. "Train the Trainers" Education (RTT, international)
6. Link between ESTRO ETC and European Institute of Radiotherapy (EIR)

I joined that last group. The EIR was established by ESTRO to provide current consensus statements with evidence-based and pragmatic guidelines on topics of practical relevance for radiation oncology. This group discussed how ETC could help EIR in achieving its goals in terms of knowledge dissemination and the production of useful guidance for the radiotherapy community. The benefits for ETC from such a collaboration were also identified. As this was the first get-together of members of the ESTRO teaching faculty, it is premature to state whether this was a successful event or not. Certainly it was long overdue and interesting. One hopes that it will serve as the start of similar future meetings to follow-up on the above themes and also to identify ways of assisting teachers with their task. The teaching faculty of the ESTRO School is a multi-disciplinary group of individuals primarily working in hospitals and/or research and not necessarily engaged full time in teaching. Attendees to ESTRO courses wish to gain knowledge and improve the standard of science at their workplace and as a consequence, provide a better service to their patients. One would welcome ideas on improving one's own teaching skills so that from the enormous amount of knowledge, often compressed in the five days of a teaching course, one can ensure that participants take home unambiguous messages of good working practice and useful teaching material to use as reference. " ■

Maria Mania Aspridakis

Physicist, Kantonsspital Luzern, Switzerland



Morten Høyer

"I had the pleasure of joining the Train the Trainers (TTT) group at the Teachers Retreat. The TTT is an educational programme in which ESTRO and IAEA facilitate education and training organised and conducted at regional level and it has been successful for RTs in the Eastern part of Europe. We had a long and fruitful discussion on the future perspectives of the TTT-programme. We recommended that ESTRO and IAEA should extend the TTT-programme to the rest of Europe and other professionals in radiation oncology. Teaching on an ESTRO course is exciting. We all put a lot of effort into the courses, but they always give back great value and many good memories. The Teacher's Retreat is part of a process in which the ESTRO teaching programme can be modified and renewed. It was a great opportunity to influence the future direction of the programme. " ■

Morten Høyer

Radiation Oncologist, Aarhus University Hospital, Denmark