



BRACHYTHERAPY

Update on GEC-ESTRO activities including highlights of 2020

In April 2020 I took over GEC-ESTRO leadership from Bradley Pieters (current past-chair) and Vratislav Strand has replaced me as chair-elect during an online GEC-ESTRO committee meeting. Previously, the transition would have taken place as an onsite event during the General GEC-ESTRO Assembly at the World Congress of Brachytherapy (WCB) in Vienna. However, due to Covid-19, ESTRO 2020 and WCB had to be postponed, onsite meetings are no longer possible but the community has found new ways for online communication and cooperation. There is no platform for a General GEC-ESTRO Assembly this year and therefore this interim report is intended to keep the community up to date.

Current status of the GEC-ESTRO Committee

The committee currently has 11 members including the three chairs, the secretary (Marisol de Brabandere), the seven working group leaders (Peter Hoskin, Frank-André Siebert, Vratislav Strnad, Alexandra Steward, Luca Tagliaferri, Li Tee Tan, and Kari Tanderup), one additional member (Csaba Polgár) and one observer from the Young ESTRO Committee (Cyrus Chargari). The committee is represented in the different ESTRO councils. GEC-ESTRO committee activities are supported structurally by the ESTRO office (Evelyn Chimfwembe).

During the last eight months we organised several online committee meetings to ensure that ongoing activities are agreed upon and proceed and to start new initiatives if indicated.

New solutions and compromises for previously planned meetings

The greatest drawback for the international brachytherapy community is without doubt the Covid-19 induced postponement of the World Congress of Brachytherapy. This Congress had been organised with Bradley Pieters and Christian Kirisits in the lead, and we were all looking forward to three days of brachytherapy related topics presented in face-to-face teaching lectures, symposia, debates, workshops, proffered papers and abstract sessions. In the early weeks of the pandemic when there was still hope that the virus might be contained, postponement of WCB from April to autumn 2020 was considered, still hoping on an onsite event. However, when the virus surge went on it became clear that this was not meant to be. Therefore, WCB (with good agreement from all national societies) was postponed again to May 2021. In order to give researchers the possibility to present their work earlier, a "slim" brachytherapy track was agreed upon for ESTRO 2020, consisting of proffered paper sessions including some highlights. Invited speakers and presenters at WCB were informed and asked for their preferences. We considered their choices as much as possible. A new round of abstract submission for WCB was initiated and the new programme was finalised. As the virus surge is still going on and effective prevention or treatment is still awaited, WCB in May 2021 will be a full online congress. It will no longer be associated with the annual ESTRO meeting as had been intended, as this has recently been postponed to August 2021. Despite these unfortunate developments, we thankfully can report that the brachytherapy community is willing to go on, accepting compromises in situations when the optimal solution is not feasible. We therefore are hopeful that WCB 2021 will be well attended.

The postponement of WCB to next year will influence the brachytherapy presence at ESTRO 2021. Instead of a full brachytherapy track, the programme will not include proffered papers and poster sessions, but will consist of brachytherapy related symposia, debates, teaching lectures.

Due to the Covid-19 situation, the yearly GEC-ESTRO workshop had to be cancelled as well. The next workshop is now scheduled as an onsite event from 18 to 19 November 2021 in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Summary

- ESTRO 2020 is scheduled for 28th November to 1st December and includes a brachytherapy track consisting of proffered paper sessions and some highlights.
- WCB is scheduled for 6-8th May 2021 as full online congress.
- ESTRO 2021 will hopefully have a face to face component including a "slim" brachytherapy track.
- GEC-ESTRO workshop is scheduled for 18th to 19th November in Rotterdam, The Netherlands as an onsite event.

ESTRO Teaching courses in the field of brachytherapy (2020)

- Comprehensive and practical brachytherapy, face to face course, 9th to 13th [February](#) 2020, Brussels, Belgium
- Image-guided radiotherapy and chemotherapy in gynaecological cancer: focus on adaptive brachytherapy, full online edition, 24th September to 05th November 2020

GEC-ESTRO Handbook

Parts of the second edition of the GEC-ESTRO Handbook of Brachytherapy are available online on the ESTRO website. The editors are Bradley Pieters, Peter Hoskin, and Dimos Baltas. It is difficult to find volunteers to write the specific chapters of the book, but the finalisation of the book is steadily progressing. To date 15 chapters have been published and 7 are in progress.

With pleasure, we announce that Richard Pötter is the recipient of the Jens Overgaard Legacy at ESTRO 2020. Among many other achievements, Richard is one of the pioneers in image, and particular MRI, guided brachytherapy and richly deserves this award.

With great sadness we noted the death of Jan Battermann on 21st July 2020. He leaves a great legacy in the field of brachytherapy and in particular prostate LDR brachytherapy. He received the Groupe Européen de Curiethérapie (GEC)-ESTRO iridium award in 2011.

Reports from the working groups:

- [GEC-ESTRO BRAPHYQS](#)
- [GEC-ESTRO Breast](#)
- [GEC-ESTRO Gastro-Intestinal](#)
- [GEC-ESTRO Gynaecology](#)
- [GEC-ESTRO Head - Neck & Skin \(HNS\)](#)
- [GEC-ESTRO Urology](#)
- [GEC-ESTRO Brachy-HERO](#)

Hopefully we will meet in person again in 2021. Take care!



Ina Jürgenliemk-Schulz
Chair, GEC-ESTRO committee
November 2020

