



# CONFERENCES

## Jens Overgaard legacy award



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### *What does this award mean to you?*

Receipt of this award from one of the most important international societies in the field of radiation oncology, the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO), is a great honour for me. I was really moved by ESTRO's motivation for assigning this award to me, as kindly said by Jens Overgaard himself during the introduction at the ESTRO meeting. Receipt of international recognition for the work we have done as a team at UMCG for the last 10-15 years is not only a great honour but also extremely encouraging to us to continue our work.

### *To whom would you like to dedicate your award?*

I would like to dedicate this award to the entire team of the department of radiation oncology of UMCG. The work I have done would never have been possible without the creativity, efforts, collegiality, and friendship of the great team of fantastic people I work with every day.

### *What have been the highlights of your career?*

The first highlight in my career was my appointment as professor and chair of the department of radiation oncology at the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) in 2004. I was relatively young (41 years old); I had only seven years' experience as a registered radiation oncologist and no managerial experience. However, I considered this a great opportunity to realise my vision of how evidence-based radiotherapy should be developed. During the first half-year of my appointment, the hospital board asked me to develop a plan for the introduction of proton therapy at UMCG. Part of that plan was to design an evidence-based alternative to randomised controlled trials that would be acceptable to healthcare policy makers to prove the effectiveness of proton therapy for patients who would benefit most from this new technology. This was the main incentive for the development of the model-based approach.

The second highlight was the treatment of the first patient at the UMCG proton therapy center in January 2018, which was 14 years after we had started to develop our first plan.

### *What is your next challenge?*

The next challenge is to explore which patients will benefit the most from use of proton therapy, especially regarding prevention of late radiation-induced side effects, which may have a devastating effect on a patient's daily functioning and quality of life. In

addition, we contribute actively to the enhancement of the technological opportunities of proton therapy that may further improve the therapeutic window, such as proton arc therapy and ultra-high dose rate (FLASH) therapy.

### ***What has been your involvement within ESTRO?***

I have been involved in ESTRO for many years as a member of scientific advisory committees for various scientific meetings and I am the current chair of the clinical scientific advisory committee of ESTRO 2022 in Copenhagen. In addition, I have been actively involved as a faculty member and teacher of several ESTRO courses.

### ***Did your parents encourage you in your career, or would they rather you had done something else?***

My father was a maths teacher, and my mother worked in a clothes store when she was young. Although they had no medical background, my parents were extremely proud of what I achieved in my professional life as a doctor and always encouraged me to follow my heart, which I did. They considered my assignment as professor in Groningen as one of the highlights of their lives. My wife and I have tried to pass this philosophy to our three daughters as well. They are happy and successful as a Dutch teacher at international schools, an entrepreneur, and a lawyer, respectively, and I am extremely proud of them.

### ***When do you think you will retire, and what would you like to do then?***

I do not think I will retire completely. In my view, it is important to remain as active as possible, both socially and professionally. I would prefer to do something that is useful for society, in which I can use my experience and skills that I developed during my professional career to the benefit of others. It should, however, be something challenging, otherwise I am afraid I will get bored.

