



SCHOOL

Comprehensive and Practical Brachytherapy Course

Interview with the course director, Bradley Pieters

Could you elaborate on the key topics that are covered in the course?

In the course, apart from the most common indications for brachytherapy, which are prostate, gynaecological, breast and skin cancers, we will also cover areas that are less known. Examples of less common indications are anal canal, choroidal melanoma and paediatric tumours. Besides these site topics, we will also pay attention to more general aspects, such as radiobiology, treatment planning optimisation and radiation safety.

What are the primary learning outcomes that participants can expect to achieve by the end of the brachytherapy course?

The course will be attended by professionals of different disciplines and therefore the expectations regarding the learning objectives will be different for each participant. In general, by the end of the course, the participants will be able to understand and explain the background and rationale for the different brachytherapy indications and brachytherapy concepts. Also, the participants will be able to assess the different aspects of brachytherapy in terms of correctness, usefulness, relevancy, and safety.

How does the course balance theoretical principles with practical examples and exercises to enhance participants' understanding of brachytherapy?

The course is a blend of theoretical lectures, pre-course contouring exercises, continuous formative tests, and practical exercises to bring theory into practice. The teachers are available throughout the course to address specific questions that the participants bring with them and to give advice.

Can you provide examples of the types of practical exercises participants will engage in during the course? How will these practical exercises translate into real-world scenarios?

We will explain the use of the most common applicators in brachytherapy and the differences between applicators with their advantages and drawbacks. The case discussions are of most value when the theory is brought into a real-case scenario. For example, the prostate and cervix contouring cases provide the participants with direct feedback and improvement of the contouring.

What impact do you hope the brachytherapy course will have on participants' abilities to apply their knowledge in clinical oncology settings?

To practise brachytherapy day-to-day, clinicians must be exposed to the clinical routine. This course cannot provide this kind of clinical practice. However, we hope that the participants with full background knowledge will be able easily to bring what they have learned into practice. Participants will be able to judge the choices that they make in clinical practice and to reflect on what they have learned during the course.

What specific benefits can participants expect to gain from attending the course, particularly in terms of advancing their knowledge and skills in the field?

Participants in the course will have a broad and comprehensive background regarding what is possible in the field of brachytherapy. They will understand the differences between treatments, but most of all also the similarities, and they will be able to use the knowledge they have gained

from one field in another.

Are there specific developments on the horizon that you foresee influencing the content and structure of the brachytherapy course?

Every year the course is slightly adapted, based among other things on the comments received from the participants. This year we will focus on activating the foreknowledge of the participants so that they can get the most possible out of the course.

What advice would you give to prospective participants to maximise their engagement and learning during the brachytherapy course?

The [GEC-ESTRO Handbook of Brachytherapy](#) offers good preparation. This handbook is freely available to all participants and forms the basis of the course. This will certainly help to increase participants' foreknowledge. During the course, there will be enough time to ask questions.

Beyond knowledge acquisition, how does the course facilitate networking among participants and foster a collaborative and supportive community with experts in the field?

My experience is that participants from different countries attend this course and I see people exchanging their experiences in friendly conversations during coffee breaks and on other occasions. The social event is always very well attended; at it, there is the possibility to continue discussions with the teachers and others in a relaxed atmosphere and to build new relationships.

How does the course cater to the diverse backgrounds and expertise levels of participants, ensuring that each attendee finds value and relevance in the content?

The faculty of the course is a mix of physicians, a physicist and a brachytherapy-dedicated radiation therapist. They all give lectures and are involved in the practical part of the course. In this way, we try to meet the different backgrounds of the participants.

How can participants continue to access resources and support after completing the course to reinforce their learning?

As mentioned earlier, the [GEC-ESTRO handbook](#) is available to all the participants and is a good way to retain background knowledge. GEC-ESTRO organises yearly a pre-meeting course at the ESTRO congress and there is also a workshop organised every year in the autumn. These are splendid events at which you can increase your knowledge in the field of brachytherapy.

Comprehensive and Practical Brachytherapy

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For more information and to register, click [here](#).



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