

# ESTRO 2008: my experience

*Alison Beal*

*AIR International Travel Scholarship Recipient*



*The Grand Palace, Brussels, at twilight*

In December 2008, I attended the ESTRO teaching course on Image Guided Radiotherapy in Clinical Practice, held in Brussels, Belgium at the Erasmus Hogeschool.

I joined physicists, oncologists and radiotherapists from 30 countries while, for five days, we attended presentations by the teaching staff. The teachers represented a number of nationalities and centres. This provided a wide variety of techniques and technologies to explore as well as different viewpoints of image guided radiotherapy (IGRT).

Early on Sunday morning, we stood in the cold waiting for the shuttle buses to deliver us to Erasmus Hogeschool for the first day. We arrived rather cold but were welcomed by tea, coffee and cake.

The programme began at 9.00 am, with the morning filled with presentations on IGRT from the physicist's, physician's and radiotherapist's perspective.

After lunch, it was time for the hospital site visits. Participants were able to visit one of four centres, each utilising different IGRT techniques.

The four centres and their equipment were:

- UZ Brussels: stereoscopic kV-imaging, 6DOF robotics and respiratory synchronised gating (BrainLAB), MV CT (TomoTherapy)
- KUL, Leuven: kV cone beam CT (CBCT) (Varian), Ultrasound (US)

- MAASTRO, Maastricht: MV CBCT (Siemens)
- UZG, Gent: US (Varian), kV CBCT (Elekta)

The site visits allowed us to gain some practical experience with the equipment and techniques to be discussed over the next four days.

I chose to visit UZ Brussels, as my department also uses the BrainLAB robotic couch and kV imaging equipment for stereotactic radiotherapy.

We discussed the use of the BrainLAB system and the Novalis linear accelerator and were shown how this system can be used for respiratory gating techniques. I found this very interesting as my department does not currently use gating techniques but has been looking to implement them.

We were also shown the TomoTherapy machine and spent time discussing its use at UZ Brussels. Not many centres have TomoTherapy machines so it was interesting to learn how it is used clinically.

The real work began on Monday.

Monday and Tuesday dealt with the theoretical aspects of IGRT. The physicists were in their element, but we, poor radiotherapists and physicians, found it more difficult to understand. The break for lunch was very welcome on those first two days.

The lectures on Wednesday and Thursday covered practical aspects of IGRT. Now it was the radiotherapists and physicians turn to shine.



*Guildhouses in Brussels*

As a break from the lectures, four workshops were arranged for us. The topics for the workshops were: MVCT and CBCT, kV CBCT, kV stereoscopic imaging and US and image guided brachytherapy. At each workshop, we discussed relevant technologies and techniques and were given the opportunity to ask questions of the teaching staff, clinical users and company representatives.

There were two social events to attend during the course. Monday night hosted the event icebreaker – a ten pin bowling tournament. The challenge was to beat last year's winning score, which happened to belong to none other than Dirk Verellen, the course director. Free drinks and hor d'oeuvres combined with the fun of bowling was a great way to get us mingling. It wasn't long before everyone was chatting away and laughing at some of the more interesting bowling styles.

The second social event was a three-course dinner at the Hotel Metropol. This beautiful hotel is over 110 years old and is famous for hosting the first Solvay Physics Conference, at which Albert Einstein, Ernest Rutherford and Marie Curie were present.

Pre-dinner drinks were served in the magnificent hotel foyer, with a pianist to serenade us before we headed into one of the function rooms for dinner. After dinner, the DJ cranked up the music and the dancing began. The teaching staff got right into it, showing off all their moves. Slowly, more people joined them, until many were dancing the night away.

This was the first ESTRO course I have been to and I enjoyed it immensely. The topics discussed were very interesting and it was great to meet other radiotherapists, physicians and physicists from around the world. It really opened my eyes to what is going on outside of my department.

The social events were lots of fun and gave us a chance to relax after long days of hard work. Attending this course was a great experience for me and I highly recommend it to others interested in IGRT.

**Five Dock Medical Imaging**

# Mammography Workshops

**Presented by Eva Wilson**

**Sessions on 30th May, 11 July, 5th September,  
1st November**

**9.00 am to 12 noon**

**144 Great North Road, Five Dock NSW 2016**

**Registration \$250.00 per session**  
(cheque or money order – Five Dock Medical Imaging)

**Contact: Leon Carroll**  
tel (02) 8705 8300 or fax (02) 8705 8399  
email [leon@fdmi.com.au](mailto:leon@fdmi.com.au)

**RSVP 1st May 2009**

**Class size strictly limited to five people  
for maximum benefit**

