



European Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology

## THE EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR THERAPEUTIC RADIOLOGY AND ONCOLOGY INTERVIEW WITH MURIEL HALLET

FOUNDED IN 1980, ESTRO EXISTS TO ADVANCE ALL ASPECTS OF RADIATION ONCOLOGY THROUGH A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES FOR ITS MEMBERS, THE HEALTHCARE AND PATIENT COMMUNITIES. AND THEY OF COURSE ORGANISE EVENTS. MURIEL HALLET, EVENTS & INDUSTRY RELATIONS SENIOR MANAGER, TELLS US ALL ABOUT IT.

**HQ: Could you briefly describe ESTRO?**

*Muriel Hallet:* ESTRO stands for European Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology. The association was created more than 25 years ago and aims at clinicians, physicists, biologists, technicians specialised in radiotherapy and in a broader perspective at anyone active in the Oncology field. It has around 5,000 members throughout the world, even though we are a European organisation.

The key role of ESTRO is to ensure the international exchange of information and knowledge in the field of radiotherapy. Therefore we organise courses, conferences and congresses, mainly in Europe but some of our teaching activities take place all over the world.

Altogether, we organize 6 conferences on a regular basis: four (PREVENT<sup>®</sup>, ICHNO<sup>®</sup>, GEC/ESTRO<sup>®</sup> and our Biennial Conference) on uneven years, for 200 to 2,500 participants, and two (MIRO<sup>®</sup> and our Annual Congress) on even years, for up to 5,000 participants.

**HQ: What is the Society's decision process concerning the organisation of a congress?**

*Muriel Hallet:* Generally speaking the conference/PCO department of ESTRO takes the decision of where conferences and congresses are going to take place according to specific criteria. In case we can't decide between two destinations - and this can happen - we leave the decision to our Presidents or the Board.



Exhibition area at ESTRO 27, Göteborg, Sweden

**HQ: Where will the next congresses be held?**

*Muriel Hallet:* Our next conference will be held in Porto in May 2009, for approximately 500 delegates. The decision process for this conference was a bit different than usual as we are dealing with a scientific group that was used to organising the conference on their own. This time, the scientific group proposed three destinations: Brighton (instead of London for budgetary reasons), Warsaw and Porto. Warsaw was eliminated quite quickly because of lack of availability; it was a tight match between Brighton and Porto which was finally won by the latter.

When it comes to choosing a destination, there of course can be an indication from

our President or the board that we have to be frustrated and to diversify our offer, so that one particular geographical region is not privileged to the disadvantage of another. Destinations in Northern Europe have the same chance to welcome us as destinations in Southern Europe. However when it comes to the Annual congress, it becomes a challenge to find a suitable venue in the South offering the required capacities (5,000 participants, 8 rooms in parallel and 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space). Nevertheless Barcelona met this challenge since they have been selected for the 2010 Annual Congress.

In August-September 2009, the 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial conference will take place in Maastricht. We expect around 2,500 delegates. Maastricht

## ORGANISING CONFERENCES CAN BE A RISKY BUSINESS BUT WHEN YOU DO IT, IT GENERATES IMPORTANT REVENUE THAT SERVES BETTER THE RADIOTHERAPY COMMUNITY



Poster area at ESTRO 27



Muriel Hallet



Plenary session at ICHNO, Barcelona

has been in the bidding process for 6 years and they were really eager to get this conference. The main problem, and the reason why they have failed in the past, was their hotel capacity. For the 2009 conference, they have met the challenge by booking 90% of the hotel capacity... So we finally have the opportunity to work together.

As for hotels, the majority of our participants pay everything for themselves - a very small number of delegates are sponsored - so we use a limited number of 5-star hotels. Students, for example, need affordable accommodation.

**HQ: When choosing a congress centre, what criteria must it satisfy?**

*Muriel Hallet:* A congress centre is the very first thing we look at in a destination. It comes even before the convention bureau. The size and capacity of the venue come first. The teams working there must be easy to work with and have the ability to set up a conference in an efficient way. Everything has to be at reasonable walking distance. The services a centre provides, the flexibility it can boast and the willingness to work with us are of course aspects we take into consideration.

**HQ: Do you work with a PCO or a DMC? Why? What do you expect of them?**

*Muriel Hallet:* ESTRO works with a PCO when it comes to accommodation. A PCO will always be able to negotiate better rates

and services, as we are a 'one-shot buyer'. They also usually provide a very good level of service.

For other services, we usually don't work with a PCO but it all depends. If the PCO is able to better negotiate prices than we would on our own, then I don't see the reason why we shouldn't work with a local PCO!

**HQ: Do you foresee changes to the way in which you operate over the next few years?**

*Muriel Hallet:* There have already been many changes so I would say first let's stabilise. But I would always push for a change if it is a constructive one. Associations can be very conservative and being too conservative can prevent you from improvement and innovation.

Nowadays more and more associations tend to be better organised, in a more professional way. Organising conferences is a risky business but when you do it properly and you have a good market for it, it generates important revenue. I strongly believe that better organised associations serve the community to which they belong more efficiently.

**HQ: Have you been affected by the current global crisis?**

*Muriel Hallet:* Yes we have. Unfortunately cancer does not decrease because of the financial crisis, but budgetary restrictions do affect hospitals and mainly sponsors and

exhibitors. As very few of our participants are sponsored, we probably suffer less than others, but we can definitely feel an impact.

[www.estro.org](http://www.estro.org)

- (1) PREVENT: *Prevention, Reorganisation, Evaluation and Finalisation of Normal Tissue Effects of Radiotherapy*
- (2) ICHNO: *International Conference on Innovative Approaches in Head & Neck Oncology*
- (3) GEC/ESTRO: *Groupes Européens de Co-thérapie / ESTRO*
- (4) MIRO: *Molecular Imaging in Radiotherapy Oncology*

**ESTRO EVENTS**

- 2004**  
GEC-ESTRO-ABS-ALATRO - Barcelona - 650 part.  
ESTRO 23 - Amsterdam - 3,600 part.
- 2005**  
GEC-ESTRO - Budapest - 550 part.  
8<sup>th</sup> Biennial ESTRO Conference - Lisbon - 1,800 part.
- 2006**  
ESTRO 25 - Leipzig - 3,850 part.
- 2007**  
ICHNO - Barcelona - 1,100 part.  
GEC-ESTRO - Montpellier - 550 part.  
9<sup>th</sup> Biennial ESTRO Conference- Barcelona - 2,200 part.
- 2008**  
ESTRO 27 - Göteborg - 4,450 part.
- 2009**  
PREVENT - Brussels - 200 part.  
2<sup>nd</sup> ICHNO - Barcelona - 1,100 part.  
GEC-ESTRO - Porto  
10<sup>th</sup> Biennial ESTRO Conference - Maastricht
- 2010**  
MIRO - Brussels  
ESTRO 29 - Barcelona