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ESMO European Integration Fellowship Report

Medical University of Vienna, Department of Radiation Oncology, Vienna, Austria

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Head and neck cancer – diagnostics, treatment and follow-up

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Introduction:

My project goals include full understanding of risk factors for head and neck tumors, its impact on population, prognostic parameters and treatment modalities with emphasis on chemoradiotherapy. Proposed host institution (Medical University of Vienna, Department of Radiation Oncology, Vienna, Austria) is well educated in comprehensive oncology care for head and neck cancer and experienced in high precision radiotherapy called intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) which has been widely adopted because of its ability to more precise target tumors and reduce late morbidity by diminishing radiation doses to normal critical organs. However, this technique is not available at my home institution. Furthermore, this institution is experienced in combining radiation with chemotherapy and agents targeting signal pathways (targeted therapy) which is nowadays considered as standard of care for non-surgically treated patients with head and neck cancer.

Main part:

During my stay Vienna I got in-depth experience in state-of-the-art IMRT/VMAT treatment of head and neck cancer with or without systemic agents in multidisciplinary setting. Also, I was closely involved in VMAT treatment planning and all aspects of management of head and neck malignancies. Furthermore, I got valuable experience in terms of target volume and organs at risk delineation for H&N VMAT with gaining knowledge about principles of making and evaluation of radiotherapy plans.

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Conclusion:

The most valuable take-home lesson from my stay was the possibility to discuss all H&N cancer patients through multidisciplinary setting in order to provide optimal treatment options according to institutional protocols and individual considerations. Furthermore acquired skills will be used at the home institute in order to implement modern techniques of radiotherapy which might lead to reduction of total dose to normal tissue and possible higher life quality of our patients.

Mandatory:
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Petar Suton /