



European Society for Medical Oncology

### ESMO Clinical Unit Visit 2014

Department of Oncology at the University Hospital Antwerp, Belgium

1 September – 12 October 2014



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**Host institute:** Department of Oncology, University Hospital Antwerp, Belgium



Between September 1 and October 12 I had the opportunity to participate in one of the ESMO Educational Fellowships a six week Clinical Unit Visit. Because of my growing interest in head and neck oncology, I opted for the Department of Oncology at the University Hospital Antwerp in Belgium. Professor Jan B. Vermorken is globally recognized as one of the leading experts in head and neck tumor management and I was very lucky when he agreed to accept me as a fellow for the period of 6 weeks. Following Professor Vermorken during his research work was an amazing opportunity for me to improve clinical and scientific skills and I feel deeply honored by his willingness, kindness and helpfulness.

Scheduled on every Monday, the meetings of the multidisciplinary head and neck oncologic team were perfectly organized for providing collaborative reviews of patients' records and comprehensive approaches in treatment planning. The day after these meetings I could see the discussed patients in the outpatient department of otolaryngology and evaluate their present illness as well as their past medical history with the help of the attending physicians. Professor Vermorken introduced me to some of his colleagues including Professor Pol Specenier, a medical oncologist, who took me to his consultations, Professor Martin Lammens, the head of the Department of Pathology, doctor Laurens Carp from the Department of Nuclear Medicine and Professor Olivier M. Vanderveken and doctor Carl Van Laer both from the Department of Otolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery. We regularly met at the tumor boards and also worked together on various research projects. Furthermore, Professor Vermorken arranged for me a short visit to the Department of Radiotherapy, where doctor Dirk Van Gestel was ready to show me tomotherapy and discuss it together with other novel techniques in radiation oncology. I express my sincere thanks to all of the colleagues for their willingness in explaining to me the respective issues of head and neck cancer management.

In the course of my stay at the University Hospital Antwerp I had the outstanding opportunity to participate in writing three scientific papers one of which a case report about a male patient presenting with repeatedly relapsing oropharyngeal cancer in whom a long-term disease-free survival has been achieved after two successive bio-chemotherapy regimens. The second paper was a review article regarding concomitant gemcitabine and radiation treatment of locally advanced head and neck cancer. Finally, together with Professor Vermorken I co-authored a book chapter concerning systemic therapy of recurrent and/or metastatic squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck. All that meant a lot of additional work but I really enjoyed it, since it was exactly what I had been looking for. My intense clinical and scientific involvement at the international reference cancer center with excellent patient care and cutting-edge research has enabled me to gain important insight into the field of my interest. I believe it will help me in my future career progression, being at the same time a good source for improving diagnostic and treatment procedures at my home institution.

Antwerp is a charming city with a strong cultural heritage and impressive architecture. The University Hospital Antwerp is located near the University of Antwerp Campus Drie Eiken in the green surroundings of the municipality Edegem. I rented a small apartment in the suburbs of Antwerp easily reaching the hospital by bus and travelling through beautiful streets of the district Wilrijk lined with old and modern stone and brick houses. Taken together, I had a great time in Antwerp. Professor Vermorken transformed my fellowship into an exceptional professional experience full of fascinating clinical research and scientific writing. Thank you ESMO for your support and your relentless promotion of professional development among young oncologists.

**Petr Szturz, Czech Republic**

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