

International Society of Geriatric Oncology (SIOG) 2014 - Bringing two worlds together: oncology and geriatrics

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In October 2014, the 14th conference of the International Society of Geriatric Oncology was held in Lisbon, Portugal, celebrating the International Society of Geriatric Oncology's mission by bringing together multidisciplinary experts in both oncology and geriatric medicine. More than 350 healthcare workers from all over the world participated, not only physicians but also a growing number of nurses and allied healthcare workers with a special interest in the care for older persons with cancer.

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Introduction

Last year's conference intended to bridge the gap between oncology and geriatric medicine, featuring multidisciplinary sessions divided into five different tracks: solid tumours, hematologic malignancies, new therapies and basic science, nursing, supportive care and geriatric assessment as well as advocacy and socio-economical issues.

Increasing life expectancy in the general population and the fact that a disproportional burden of cancer occurs in people age 65 years and older, have generated great interest in delivering better cancer care for older patients in the past decades. The recently published International Society of Geriatric Oncology (SIOG) guideline on geriatric assessment (GA) recommends that all patients with cancer age 70 years or older undergo some form of geriatric assessment, which provides a global view on the general health status, taking age-related aspects into account (e.g. functional status, cognitive status, nutritional status, etc.). It is not surprising that GA and GA-related topics are an important

topic of the annual conference, specifically interesting for nurses and allied healthcare workers who are dedicated to implement GA in daily oncology practice.

Recently the interest of SIOG has grown to focus on the role of nurses and allied healthcare workers within the care of older patients with cancer. This resulted in the establishment of the SIOG Nursing and Allied Health Interest Group in 2014, which is designated to develop and promote excellence in geriatric oncology nursing and allied health through the SIOG strategic directions: education/clinical practice, research and advocacy. For the annual conference, special interest sessions were created: geriatric syndromes in oncology and international geriatric oncology models of care. The importance was also highlighted by the large number of abstracts submitted in the nursing, supportive care and geriatric assessment track, resulting in 56 poster presentations providing an update of the current state of the art.

To further promote interest and work in the field of geriatric oncology, the SIOG Nursing and Allied Health

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Investigators Award was founded, which is presented to nurses or allied health workers whose work contributes significantly to the care of older persons with cancer. Three speakers were selected to present their work at last year's annual conference: Heidi Yulico, a Geriatric Nurse Practitioner in the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre of New York (topic: multidisciplinary educational course for oncology nurses); Ginah Nightingale, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pharmacy Practice of the Jefferson School of Pharmacy, University of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (topic: pharmacist-led medication program) and Cindy Kenis, a Geriatric Oncology Nurse in the University Hospitals of Leuven, Belgium (topic: prognostic value of GA for overall survival). The first SIOG Nursing and Allied

Health Investigators Award winner was the third speaker: Cindy Kenis.

Conclusion

In general, the 14th SIOG conference was a great success, bringing together excellent speakers and topics related to the care of older persons with cancer. One of the main goals of the SIOG conference remains the development of a worldwide platform with the ultimate goal of improving care for older persons with cancer. All interested physicians, nurses and/or other health-care workers are very welcome at the 15th SIOG conference in Prague, Czech Republic, 12-14 November 2015. More information about the SIOG can be found on the www.siog.org website.

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