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Review

The French Society of Young Radiation Oncologists: History, goals and perspective

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ABSTRACT

The SFjRO was created ten years ago to promote radiation oncology teaching in France. Our society has now more than 120 members from all around the country. Each year, two national courses are organized where all members are invited.

1. Learning radiation therapy in France

1.1. *Radiation therapy residency*

Residency in oncology takes five years in France. Each resident has already studied medicine for six years before, making the total time of eleven years to complete their education. During that time, we receive courses about general oncology: cellular and molecular biology, genetics, pharmacology, medical imaging, stem cells, cell death, oncogenesis, immunity, angiogenesis, pathology, epidemiology, and chemotherapy. Specific courses about radiophysics, radiobiology, brachytherapy and radiation therapy innovations are also mandatory.

We must also complete a precise scheme for practical teaching that includes: f our semesters in radiation oncology departments, two semesters in medical oncology departments, four semesters in at least two departments approved for radiation oncology teaching such as nuclear medicine, medical imaging or pathology departments.

1.2. *Demographics*

During the national courses organized by the French Society of Young Radiation Oncology (SFjRO) and the French Society of Radiation Oncology (SFRO), surveys are performed yearly to analyse demography and quality. Between 2000 and 2003, 50 radiation oncologists were being trained in the whole country

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(about 15 per year were graduating).[1] This number has increased each year to reach 75 residents in 2005 and around 120 in 2011. Men and women currently account for 48.5% and 51.5%, respectively.[2] This number is still insufficient compared to the ever-increasing need for oncologists in a country such as France, where cancer prevalence should rise in the coming years, mainly due to the aging of population.

Overall, even with this recent increase in the number of young radiation oncologists, the demographic evolution of radiation oncologists only partially covers future needs.

In 2005, the first prospective study was performed among French residents: 60% of the young radiation oncologists chose it because they had already been in an oncology department before the residency.[2] Students were also asked to give their point of view on the quality of the practical and theoretical training. Some needs were emphasised, such as: (1) the quality of the follow-up during the training (importance of the recent implementation of a logbook); (2) importance of theoretical and practical training in the radiotherapy department; (3) support and incentive for research and scientific publication.

Since that time, a web-based logbook system has been created for the oncology residency (both medical and radiation oncology)[3] giving resident a protected and private web page with their courses program, practical training information and goals, ongoing research and curriculum vitae.

In 2008, a qualitative analysis of practical and theoretical training was performed using a visual analogical scale. The practical training received a 5.6 score, while theoretical education was scored 6.1. An analysis of the motivations for choosing the radiation oncology speciality demonstrates interests for innovation, technology, imaging and research.

By the end of 2010, twenty-seven residents graduated (16 in 2008 and 42 in 2009). Usually, a postgraduate position is necessary to complete their training as assistant professor in a university hospital or a cancer centre. Each position must be kept for at least two years for validation. However, only 36 assistant professor positions are available in France, representing half of the demand. In 2008, only 21 residents out of 104 already have a position as assistant professors. The availability of such a position remains unknown for the rest of them. Most of the remaining residents decide to pursue a career in a private practice. With the recent increase in the number of residents in radiation oncology in France, the need to create new assistant professor positions is crucial to assure quality of training for this both medical and technical speciality.

2. The French Society of Young Radiation Oncologists

2.1. History of our society

Since 2002, the SFjRO works with the SFRO (French Society of Radiation Oncologists), the CNEC (National Board of Oncology Teachers) and the INCa (National Cancer Institute) in order to improve teaching of radiation oncology in France.

Membership is free.

2.2. Missions

The goals of our society are to promote and ease the teaching of radiation oncology by developing relationships between residents and professors. By creating specific tools, giving access to scientific journals and organizing each year two theoretical courses, the SFjRO aims to give access to a better understanding of current practices in Radiation Oncology.

2.3. National courses

Our society organizes the National Radiation Therapy Courses, with a 4 year cycle, covering each fundamental fields of radiation oncology: radioanatomy (Paris, 2009), radiobiology (Lille, 2010), radiophysics (Avignon, 2011) and brachytherapy (Nancy, 2012). Each year, 120 radiation oncology residents from all around France are invited to attend our courses.

Each year, a summer school is organized and dedicated to a specific organ: head and Gynecology (Lille, 2008), Head & Neck (Tours, 2009), Sarcoma & Glioma (Bordeaux, 2010) and lung (Lyon, 2011).

2.4. French Society of Radiation Oncology Annual meeting

Our society also participates to the SFRO annual congress with delineation workshops. We have also created a Young Session, which allows 6 residents to present about a specific subject, gathering more and more young radiation oncologists each year. The best oral communication wins a travel to Canada to represent French residents in Québec for the national annual meeting.

2.5. Links to other societies

We cooperate with other young radiation oncologists' societies throughout the world in order to create European and international exchanges. In Gothenburg (2008), the Young Scientist Session was created at the ESTRO (European Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology) annual congress and has since been renewed each year (2009, Berlin and 2010, Barcelona).

3. Published studies

One of the purposes of the SFjRO is to stimulate research among young radiation oncologists. We have therefore published several studies and are working on new ones.

3.1. Delineation variability

During the French national course of radioanatomy, an expert and 120 residents were asked to use delineation stations to created three volumes of interest: GTV, CTV and PTV. They were also asked to prescribe the treatment dose. We performed a comparative study of delineation and doses prescribed for a clinical case of lung carcinoma before and after the completion of our theoretical courses. Residents were divided in 30 groups. Artiview (Aquilab SAS) was used to calculate the volume ratio (VR), common volume (CV),