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THE EDUCATION BRANCH OF EORTC AND ITS NEW PUBLICATION “REVIEWS IN ONCOLOGY”

A presentation

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The Council of the European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) decided in November 1985 to establish an Education Branch. The motivation was the rapid progress in the different fields of oncology.

The progress has not only been limited to diagnostic routines and treatment. During the last few years there has also been a rapid expansion of the knowledge of prevention, mass screening for early diagnosis, rehabilitation and psychosocial aspects on the care of cancer patients and their relatives. It was the opinion of the EORTC, that there is a need in our Society for further knowledge of all these fields. The oncologists know what cancer is like and they should be qualified to pass on their knowledge. The responsibility of oncologists is therefore considered to go beyond the clinical aspects of cancer. It was decided that the EORTC should support such educational activities for oncologists, that are adjusted to these needs and to the rapid progress in the field.

Education Branch of the EORTC

In August 1986 the Education Branch (EB) was founded. It is at present limited to six members, representing different countries and disciplines: J. Einhorn (Sweden, chairman), K.-H. Robèrt (Sweden, scientific secretary), B. Kornhuber (Western Germany, treasurer), A. Costa (Italy), M. J. Peckham (G.B.) and R. Zittoun (France). The objective of EB is to identify requirements for cancer education in Europe and to propose measures appropriate to these needs. Initially, attention has been focused on undergraduate and postgraduate medical education. The primary goal set for the EB, drawn up during the first year of its activity, has been:

- to prepare an undergraduate curriculum in oncology for medical students in Europe.
- to list all national postgraduate courses in oncology, that could be acceptable for a common European participation. The listing for 1988 is published in this issue of *Acta Oncologica*.
- to list national programmes for certification of specialists in oncology and available fellowships.
- to publish a new European journal: ‘Reviews in Oncology’.

Cooperation with the EEC

The aims, objectives and priorities of the EEC subgroup on education of the ‘Europe Against Cancer Experts Committee’ and the EB are similar. In view of this, it was desirable to establish a close and intimate cooperative work. The chairmen of the two organizations are therefore members of both committees. It has been decided, that the policy/advisory role should be performed by the subcommittee of the Europe Against Cancer experts, and the operational/executive role will be undertaken by the EORTC Education Branch. The first mutual project is planned to be a European workshop to identify the requirements for an undergraduate curriculum in oncology. The meeting will take place in Bruxelles during the cancer week in May 1988 (see below).

A European undergraduate curriculum in oncology

Recommendations for a European undergraduate curriculum in oncology are given high priority, since the education given to our medical students will be the basis for the knowledge of cancer of all physicians, including the general practitioners and other specialists than oncol-

ogists. The curriculum will be based on the results of the EEC/EORTC workshop during the first week of May 1988, inclusive of the information received by three surveys, one of which is performed by the EB.

The Organization of European Cancer Institutes (OEI) consists of about 50 of the major cancer centers and institutes in Europe. At the latest assembly of this organization in 1987, information was collected on the involvement of cancer centres in undergraduate education of medical students. The result was that a great majority of the cancer centers have facilities for undergraduate teaching, but that only 56% of them are involved in this teaching (Table 1). Only one out of three has a chair at the medical school.

The survey by the EB was based on a questionnaire that was distributed to 165 deans of well-known medical schools in Europe. More than 80% answered the questionnaire. The answers were prepared either by the dean himself or somebody appointed by the dean. One third (32%) of the universities reported presence of an integrated course in oncology, a professorship in oncology, a curriculum in oncology and an examination in oncology. Almost one half (47%) indicated a wish to have an examination in oncology. Of those without these facilities, a great majority (70% or more) indicated a wish to introduce a course, a chair and a curriculum in oncology (Table 2). A most interesting figure was, that a great majority (95%) of the universities would welcome a mutual European curriculum in oncology for medical students. The validity of these answers have not yet been controlled. However, if the answers are representative for the opinions of the deans in the majority of the medical schools in Europe, the prospects for the consensus conference and for a jointly agreed curriculum would be good.

Oncology reviews

One of the activities of the EB will be to publish an Education Branch Journal for Cancer Education—'Reviews in Oncology'. The aim of this journal will be to serve medical education and training in Europe. The first issue will be published in the autumn of 1988.

Objective. The journal will continuously update the field of oncology by publishing *pedagogical review articles* on oncology. The pedagogical point is particularly important. Hence, particular attention will be paid to clearness according to predefined requirements in order to increase the comprehension. The articles will be requested by the EB through invitations to authors with a good outlook on their field of oncology. Furthermore, the journal should be the official organ of the EB, presenting all its major achievements. This includes the analyses of cancer education in Europe, the annual listing of post-graduate courses which are suitable for an international participation, etc. Finally the journal should contain the

Table 1

Cancer centers with teaching facilities	82%
Proportion of centers involved in undergraduate education	56%
Proportion of centers with a chair for undergraduate education	37%
OEI questionnaire	

Table 2

An oncology course	86%
A chair in oncology	81%
A curriculum	70%
An examination in oncology	47%

EB-survey on undergraduate education. The table presents the proportion of all universities without the corresponding facilities, indicating a wish to have them.

announcements from the European School of Oncology (ESO) and their intercity reports.

Design of the journal. For the first three-year period, each issue will be published twice a year as an independent section of 'Acta Oncologica', named 'Reviews in Oncology'. Each issue will contain 2-3 review articles, written according to a pedagogical form with very clear figures, and no tables with undigested front-line data. The objective of each review article will be to bring about the *perspective* of its field rather than to review the *whole* field with all its references. The articles will contain basic knowledge such as: 'Monoclonal antibodies as carriers' or 'News from the radiobiologist', as well as more practical clinical knowledge such as: 'Progress in the treatment of small cell lung cancer' or 'Modern therapy of early breast cancer'.

Target groups. Specialists in oncology who wish to update their knowledge in fields others than their own, oncologists under specialist-training, and general practitioners with an interest in oncology. 'Reviews in Oncology' will also be distributed to all medical schools and cancer institutes in Europe.

Editing. The Editor in chief is the scientific secretary of the EB, K.-H. Robèrt—a hematologist from Huddinge Hospital, Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. The Editorial Board will also contain four associate editors to shape the journal and to produce ideas: Jens Overgaard (radiotherapy), Gordon McVie (medicine), Ian Fentiman (surgery), and Stefan Einhorn (basic knowledge). The educational advisory board is the EB.

Practical details and economy. Expenses and secretary help will be paid by grants from the Cancer Society in Stockholm. The grants will also be used to pay the authors a fee of about \$1000/article. Distribution of 'Reviews in Oncology' to special target groups will be made as reprints. The price of these reprints will be modest. The first issue will be published in the autumn of 1988.