

EFOMP Travel Award 2002 and the European School of Medical Physics



As a junior medical physicist undertaking the UK's programme of advanced training and responsibility (PATR), I am forever on the look out for anything that may help develop my knowledge of medical physics. So it was with great interest that I read the article entitled "Back to School in Geneva" in which another junior physicist described her experience at the European School of Medical Physics. The matter required further investigation.

The European School of Medical Physics, directed by Yves Lemoigne, is an annual event that runs for a period of five weeks from the end of October to the beginning of December. It is organised as a joint collaboration between the European Scientific Institute (ESI) and the European Federal Organisation of Medical Physics (EFOMP) and is supported by CERN, the CEA and the AAPM. The year 2002 found the school celebrating its fifth year.

Funding to attend the course was obtained from EFOMP who were offering a travel award to cover the costs of attending one week of the school. The closing date for applications was the 31st of March and consisted of sending a CV and a written description of your current post and responsibilities and the expected benefits from attending the course. Nine weeks after I submitted my application, I was informed that I was the **EFOMP Travel Award Winner 2002**.

The school, located at the ESI premises in Archamps on the border between Switzerland and France, provides modular training in medical imaging, medical computing, modern radiotherapy and brachytherapy. The courses run from Thursday to Tuesday with a break on Sunday which usually involves excursions to the surrounding area or visits to Geneva. Visits to CERN and the local hospitals are also organised for during the week and provide an interesting diversion from lectures.



Sampling "vin chaud" in the heart of Geneva

At the time the course was advertised, I was looking to fill some gaps in my PATR training. For this reason, I was drawn to the Brachytherapy week. The week was supervised by Dr. Inger-Lena Lamm, Director of EFOMP, and Dr. Ginette Marinello, both experts in the field. Lectures were given by physicists and clinicians who were not only experienced but also passionate about their subject. Among the topics covered were, dosimetry, treatment units, quality assurance, computer algorithms and treatment planning, radiobiology and image guided brachytherapy.

Throughout the course, questions and discussions were encouraged. Furthermore, students were invited to contact lecturers with queries outside of course time as well, which was very reassuring for those just beginning a career in Brachytherapy. The lecturers enthusiasm was infectious and I came away with a strong feeling that Brachytherapy was not only an interesting and versatile method for treating a large variety of cancers, but that it was also being widely and successfully practiced in many hospitals in mainland Europe. A message I would bring back to my own department.

Attending these lectures also gave me the chance to compare the procedures used on the continent with those carried out in the UK. Of particular interest was the difference in the dosimetry systems used in gynaecological applications and the use of MRI and CT in brachytherapy treatment planning.

In general, the majority of students attending were from mainland Europe. However, I discovered during my stay that there were attendees coming from as far away as Nepal. During the week that I was there, I was the only UK attendee. On the whole, students attending the Brachytherapy week had some level of experience in the field, that is, they were either working in brachytherapy already or about to embark on a career in the field. The ESMP provided an excellent opportunity for students to network and make new contacts thereby giving us the means to continue discussing and exchanging ideas and experience beyond the realms of the school.



The group at the ESMP Brachytherapy week

Many thanks to EFOMP for providing me with the opportunity to attend the European School of Medical Physics Brachytherapy week. I would wholly recommend the ESMP to any physicist looking to broaden their knowledge of medical physics and meet fellow physicists from all over Europe.

References:

Rachel Morrell, “**Back to School in Geneva**”, *Scope*, **11**(1), pg. 40-41, March 2002

EFOMP: <http://www.efomp.org>

ESI: <http://www.esi.cur-archamps.fr>