For the 9th time, EONS arranged another successful Masterclass in Oncology Nursing this spring, in collaboration with ESO (European School of Oncology). Again, it took place at the beautiful Wolfsberg Conference Centre outside Zurich, Switzerland, and was headed up by facilitators Lena Sharp, Birgitte Grube, Anita Margulies and Cristina Lacerda.

From a record number of 106 applications, 27 nurses from 15 countries were chosen to participate. This year we had a more integrated programme, mixing nurses and physicians to a greater extent to focus more on inter-professional learning.

We continued with the successful workshops in communication skills from previous years, led by Andrew Hoy and Anne Arber in collaboration with professional actors, but also added new joint sessions, such as cancer and physical activities, by nursing professor Yvonne Wengström.

Among the new topics in the nursing programme were compassion fatigue, clinical leadership and nutrition. We also focused more on immunotherapy for nurses and worked more intensely with clinical case discussions, problem-based and peer-learning, EONS Past-President Erik van Muilekom and President Danny Kelly joined us for part...
event will be moving to Germany and run from 25-30 March. So, please make a note in your calendar! Call for applications will appear on the EONS website, in the newsletter and on social media.

Merel van Klinken, from the Netherlands, shares her experience

I was selected to present my clinical case at the EONS Masterclass in Switzerland. Terrified as I was, I introduced Mrs. R to the group of nurses from across Europe that were attending the course.

Mrs R was a 51-year-old female, married with two children (and a dog) when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She received multiple lines of treatment, starting with surgery and followed by chemotherapy, radiotherapy and then immunotherapy. She was then admitted to hospital with pain due to bone metastasis.

During her admission, she received multiple rounds of radiotherapy for which she had to be sedated because of the considerable pain she was experiencing. The second fraction of radiotherapy had to be performed in an older machine, because she couldn’t be moved from the bed onto a table.

The nurses working with Mrs R questioned the need and benefit of the treatment. Our questions were about whether or not the right amount of radiotherapy was given for her metastases, as well as the timing. We thought Mrs R was not going to survive the time needed for the radiotherapy to be effective. The situation of Mrs R was complicated by a severe pseudomonas infection in the wound on her back. Dressings needed changing at least twice a day, which was very painful, sometimes impossible. The wound also caused a non-optimal pain relief. Physicians preferred an epidural, but didn’t want Mrs R to die of sepsis. Mrs R just wanted to go home to see her family and her dog, but this was not possible due to her condition. I was able to arrange for the dog to come to the hospital, where Mrs R said goodbye. Not long after, she had to be sedated and she died with her family around her.

Discussion arose in the group after the case presentation, helpfully structured by Lena Sharp. One of the tips I received from the group was to invoke a meeting where these patients are discussed after death. When I started my new job at the palliative team in my hospital I introduced this. Now we regularly have multidisciplinary meetings where we discuss patients in retrospect. This allows us to learn from the perspective of other disciplines and enhances learning efficiency for future cases.

I also talked about this with other nurses in the hospital and more and more of them have taken the initiative to set up a multidisciplinary meeting outside of the ones already there, and not only in retrospect. As scared as I was to present the case, it was inspiring to do it. In fact, the whole week was very inspiring and the organisation was excellent. I’ve learned so much, most of all from the other nurses and hearing about the healthcare systems in their countries. It was so nice to see so many likeminded and enthusiastic people. This week was very valuable to me as an oncology nurse, but also to me as a person. Once again, it was stressed that we can change healthcare and improve it.