

ITMIG 2017 – Dr. Andreas Rimner: expertise, equipment, and experience are critical prerequisites in intraoperative radiotherapy

Received: 18 November 2017; Accepted: 23 November 2017; Published: 11 January 2018.

doi: 10.21037/med.2017.11.07

View this article at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21037/med.2017.11.07>

Editor's note

On Sep 23, the 8th International Thymic Malignancy Interest Group Annual Meeting (ITMIG 2017) held in Torino, Italy, successfully ended after a dense 3-day agenda blending a superb scientific and educational program, with over 150 participants in the field from more than 20 countries or regions. During the meeting, we were honored to conduct an interview with Dr. Andreas Rimner from Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center to share his experiences in application of radiotherapy and treatment of lung cancer (*Figure 1*).

As a radiation oncologist, Dr. Rimner's research interests lie in lung cancers, pleural mesotheliomas, and thymomas. He is a member of ITMIG 2017 Scientific Program Committee and in 2014 he was awarded the ITMIG Barbara Neibauer Award. In this meeting, he was invited to give a presentation on the topic: Radiation Therapy (*Figure 2*).

Upon the comparison of stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT) and surgery in treatment of early-stage lung cancer, Dr. Rimner regarded SBRT as “an excellent alternative”, especially for patients who are not eligible for a surgery. “*More data is needed when it comes to whether SBRT at present will replace surgery*”, he said.

Based on the current retrospective data, it appears relatively safe to combine immunotherapy with radiotherapy in lung cancer. Nevertheless, prospective data is needed, before combination therapy of immunotherapy and radiotherapy can be considered standard. Dr. Rimner further explained that a recent trial examined whether adjuvant immunotherapy will benefit patients with stage III non-small cell lung cancer after receiving concurrent chemotherapy and radiation. The results were recently published and showed a significant improvement in progression-free survival. The NCCN guidelines were



Figure 1 Meeting with Dr. Rimner.



Figure 2 Snapshot of Dr. Rimner's presentation in ITMIG 2017.

changed in response to this trial.

Concerning intraoperative radiation therapy in thoracic malignancies, Dr. Andreas Rimner regarded it as a very specialized technique which required significant physics support, relevant equipment, and expertise as well. When available, he thinks it is helpful in many aspects. “*It is a great option for radio-resistant tumors especially when located near the chest wall, the spine, or mediastinum*”, he shared.

Besides the prerequisites mentioned above, for



Figure 3 Dr. Andreas Rimner: expertise, equipment, and experience are critical prerequisites in intraoperative radiotherapy (1).

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individualized intensity-modulated pleural radiation therapy in mesothelioma, Dr. Rimner highlighted that experience with this specific technique is key, and caution is particularly called on for its implementation. It should not be used outside of a clinical trial or at centers without significant experience at the current time.

By the end of the interview, when asked about secrets to success and suggestions to young doctors, Dr. Rimner regarded it very important to find the right mentor for you, and then “be enthusiastic about the field, work hard, and actively cooperate with others”.

As below is an overview of the interview. More details please refer to the interview video (*Figure 3*).

Interview questions

- (I) What’s your opinions on the prospect of stereotactic body radiotherapy and whether stereotactic body radiation will replace surgery in treating early stage lung cancer?
- (II) Could you please share your experience of immunotherapy combined with radiotherapy of lung cancer?
- (III) What do you think are the indications of intraoperative radiotherapy in thoracic malignancies and the future long-term prospect?
- (IV) How do you think we can develop individualized radiotherapy strategies for patients with thymic mesothelioma?
- (V) What’s your opinion on the most important progresses

of ITMIG in the past 3 years and the development of ITMIG for the next 3 years?

- (VI) What do you think make ITMIG a unique and distinguished organization compared to other medical and academic organizations?
- (VII) What do you think are secrets to success in the field? Would you like to share your suggestions the young doctors and researchers?

Acknowledgments

The author would like to extend appreciation to Dr. Xuefeng Leng from the Affiliated Hospital of Chengdu University and Dr. Zhuoqi Jia from the First Affiliation Hospital of Xi’an Jiaotong University for their academic support to this interview.

Funding: None.

Footnote

Provenance and Peer Review: This article was commissioned by the editorial office, *Mediastinum*. The article did not undergo external peer review.

Conflicts of Interest: The author has completed the ICMJE uniform disclosure form (available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.21037/med.2017.11.07>). TM is an intern of AME Publishing Company (publisher of the journal). The author has no other conflicts of interest to declare.

Ethical Statement: The author is accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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(Science Editor: Taoli Mai, MED, med@amegroups.com)

doi: 10.21037/med.2017.11.07

Cite this article as: Mai T. ITMIG 2017—Dr. Andreas Rimner: expertise, equipment, and experience are critical prerequisites in intraoperative radiotherapy. *Mediastinum* 2018;2:5.