

Under-representation of women in oncology leadership positions

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A growing number of oncologists in Greece are female, but women continue to be under-represented in leadership positions, according to a survey reported at the ESMO 2014 Congress.

"In Greece, and across Europe, [women](#) oncologists still find it hard to access leadership or [academic positions](#)," said Dr Helena Linardou, Associate Director of the 1st Department of Oncology at the Metropolitan Hospital, Athens, Greece, who presented the survey results at the congress.

"Women are indeed increasingly choosing [oncology](#) specialties in Greece, however, most decision-making posts are still dominated by men across the profession, in private practice, academia and national health environments. This needs to change," she said.

The survey of 80 female members of the Hellenic Societies of Medical, Radiation and Surgical Oncology showed that while women were widely represented in workplaces, team leaders were men in 82% of cases.

"The survey also showed that women oncologists are hugely under-represented in international scientific meetings and scientific society boards, and still have difficulties travelling abroad and accessing education opportunities at international level," Linardou said.

The study was conducted as part of a European initiative of and for female oncology professionals, known as "Women for Oncology"

(W4O)[1], launched by the European Society for Medical Oncology in 2013.

The Greek national equivalent, called 'W4O-Hellas', aims to create a support network for female oncologists, but also to provide a platform of direct communication and essential contribution from women doctors to women cancer patients, Linardou explains.

"This forum of women will promote the interaction and exchange of ideas among women oncologists in Greece and across Europe and will embrace and assist them throughout their career in oncology. The novelty, however, is that at the same time, this forum will offer advice, awareness and support directly from women oncologists to women suffering from cancer and their families in Greece."

The group has fund-raising events and public education meetings planned for the immediate future and an inaugural event is scheduled for Sunday, 12 October 2014, in the Athens Concert Hall (Megaron Mousikis).

"We hope to give the opportunity to women professionals from Greece and across Europe to exchange ideas and find common ground, and to discuss openly some issues faced by women with cancer," Linardou said.

"In Europe we are still suffering considerable discrepancies in terms of career opportunities between men and women," said Dr Solange Peters, ESMO Executive Board member, active in the first ESMO W4O Forum in 2013. "Women still have difficulties to access leadership positions, and for them the compatibility between professional career and daily life is still more difficult as compared to male counterparts."

The Greek oncology community should be congratulated to have taken this initiative so seriously, taking into consideration not only women

doctors but also creating a link between female practicing oncologists and female cancer patients, Peters added.

"On behalf of the ESMO Women for Oncology initiative, we encourage female colleagues in all European countries to launch similar national projects and support the career of female oncology professionals," she concluded.

Provided by European Society for Medical Oncology

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