

President's annual report 2013

Dear Colleagues,

“I don't have enough time!” This is a sentence that we hear very often in a hospital. And it's true! There are more patients, more complex techniques, more machine time is required for each patient, more... The demand is increasing because the technology is evolving faster than we are able to implement it with the time that we have available. Our workload is also increasing, paradoxically, because computers are becoming more and more important in our profession. We come back from conferences where we have seen nice treatment techniques and our physicians ask us why we don't have it in our department? We do hypofractionation, stereotaxy, VMAT hybrid treatments, SIB head and neck tomotherapy treatments, Cyberknife tracking, etc... We would like to do proton treatments, high dose-rate irradiations and have access to carbon ion beams. We would like to improve the security of the patients, to implement new techniques, to do a PhD in medical physics...

It may be time to ask ourselves if we are not doing too many things? But we can also raise the question differently - in the context of the very high dynamism that exists in radiation therapy, wouldn't it be a good idea to increase the number of medical physicists in these dynamic departments? And don't we need not only “senior” medical physicists, but also positions for young physicists who would like to become medical physicists? The actual ordinance on linear accelerators requires that a department must hire at least one medical physicist per linear accelerator. But that ordinance was issued in 2005. How many Swiss centres were treating their patients with IMRT and/or stereotactic techniques at that time? What was the equipment profile of our departments at that time? Nowadays, is one medical physicist still enough to ensure the quality of the treatments and the security of our patients in the face of the increasing complexity that we encounter each day? I think that asking the question is answering it! We need more medical physicists and more training positions to face not only the future challenges, but also the present ones. Well, this is easy to say, but maybe more difficult to obtain. Nevertheless, the best way to go in that direction is to continue working hard each day and to demonstrate that a strong team of medical physicists in a department is the guarantee of quality and security for patients.

Coming back to the past year, here is a review of some of the activities that the SSRMP has been involved in during 2013. A lot of additional information is included in the permanent committee reports.

There were four board meetings during the year. As in previous years, there was an excellent atmosphere during the board meetings. There was unanimous support for all of the decisions taken and the board members share the same vision for the future of our profession. Among the decisions and discussions of the board, and the achievements of our society in 2013, here are some of the important points:

- BAG

We met twice with BAG. As usual, different matters were discussed. A large part of the discussions were dedicated to the definition of the medical physicist in the revision of the ordinance. BAG asked the board to propose a definition and we will send it before the end of the year.

In the context of the revision of the ordinance, we also discussed the future of the CIRS system. BAG informed us that they would like to take over that task. As we already felt in the past, they think that such a system cannot be handled by volunteers and they will try to get funding for this task. We have informed BAG that we would almost certainly support such a structure.

Another nice piece of news is that our colleague Sébastien Baechler will take the lead of the radiation protection division of BAG from April 2014. It is good news that a medical physicist will occupy such an important position in radiation protection. Congratulations to him.

- Bulletin

There have been two editions of the Bulletin, including this one. Shelley Bulling and Regina Müller are warmly thanked for their work. Don't forget to participate by sending papers, information, feedback, etc...

- Website

A new harmonised website is almost ready. The new website is expected for the end of 2013.

- Professional committee (Frédéric Corminboeuf), education committee (Hans Roser) and science committee (Peter Manser)

The chairs of these three committees have issued their own reports, which are included in this Bulletin. However, here are some of the highlights from the committees:

Thirteen out of seventeen candidates have successfully passed the examination for SSRMP certification in medical physics. A warm welcome to these new colleagues!

The annual continuing education day took place on the 13th of September in Bern. The subject was "rotational therapies". Thank you to the excellent speakers. We had a very informative day. I would also like to thank Peter Manser for the organisation of that event!

We are setting up a collaboration with SRO in the field of education. As you know, some of our colleagues are giving lectures for the FMH education cursus of radio-oncologists. We have asked SRO to do the same for us, i.e. to give lectures in basic clinical radiation oncology for our medical physicists in training. We also have decided that the continuing education day in 2014 will be organized jointly with SRO.

The 2013 intercomparison was financially supported by SSRMP and is now finished. The results for conventional linacs are, as usual, very good. For Tomotherapy, a probable conceptual problem led to strange results. Further analysis will be performed in order to take this into account for the next intercomparison. I would like to thank the St-Gallen team, and particularly Hans Schiefer, for the time that they spent on organizing and performing the intercomparison.

The 2013 research grant has been awarded to Carles Goma from PSI for a PSI-METAS joint project on reference dosimetry for proton beams. Congratulations!

The report from the previous research grant is included in this Bulletin.

- Annual Congress 2013

The annual SSRMP congress 2013 (the correct terminology should be "Journées scientifiques" in French) took place in Neuchâtel the 14th and 15th of November. Sitting

in the “Salle du Grand Conseil neuchâtelois” we had the privilege to hear about all topics related to our profession: radiology, nuclear medicine, radiation protection, radiobiology and radiotherapy. I really enjoyed the magnificent location (a chateau!) and the very friendly atmosphere of the meeting. This is certainly due to the legendary sense of hospitality that the canton and the city of Neuchâtel provide to their hosts. But this is also, and mainly, due to Jean-François Germond and his wife Christiane. They gave a lot of their time to make the congress absolutely the best that it could be. And they succeeded! I would therefore like to address them, on the behalf of all the members of the Society, to say a warm “Thank you!” for this successful meeting. I would like to also thank the staff of the IRA office for their work and all the speakers, chairpersons, companies, etc..., for their participation.

Looking to the future, I realize that it will be my last year as president of SSRMP. It has been a great honour for me to serve the society in this role and I will continue to do my best to serve the interests of medical physics in Switzerland. However, this also means that next year you will have to elect a new president and also a new board. That is the reason why I incite you to think of being a candidate for one of the positions that will be open in next general assembly. Our Society needs to have experienced people in the board, but it also needs young and fresh minds to push forward our profession. Therefore do not hesitate to be a candidate next year!

Finally, I would like to thank all the active persons in the society. Their commitment is of major importance in the dynamism of our Society. I also would like to welcome anybody willing to take an active part in our Society. There is room for everyone!

Raphaël Moeckli, Lausanne, le 2 décembre 2013