Women 4 Oncology in Greece: exploring common challenges - survey of the Hellenic Society of Medical Oncology among women oncology professionals

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In recent years a significant increase in numbers of women doctors choosing oncology as a career observed in Greece and worldwide.

However, still women are hugely underrepresented in academic and decision-making positions...

ESMO W4O initiative in 2013
W4O- Hellas

- Forum of W4O in Greece within HeSMO and with the support of ESMO

- professional network of women in all areas and specialties of oncology
W4O- Hellas aims

- to identify common problems
- advocate for solutions and
- support women professionals in oncology

but also

- a platform of communication and support
directly from women in oncology to women with cancer

- to raise public awareness on common cancers in women and develop multiple fundraising actions
Survey

- **questionnaire** based on the 2013 ESMO online survey, adapted and translated in Greek and complemented with additional questions

- **to women** oncologists, members of the Hellenic Societies of Medical Oncology, Radiation Oncology, Surgical Oncology, and other women **professionals in oncology** (pathologists, oncology nurses, clinical pharmacists, molecular biologists)
Results
Gender (% of active members in 2014)

Members of HeSMO

- Male: 81%
- Female: 19%

Members of GYMO (Young Oncologists)

- Male: 66%
- Female: 34%

Women representation in the HeSMO and GYMO Boards very limited (1 woman among 7 Board members)
ESMO survey - 2013

Female representation within ESMO committees

- 21.9% of ESMO officers are women
- Ratio of female to male ESMO officers is 1:3.5
- ESMO Board 8 male officers and 3 female officers
- ESMO Young Oncologists Committee mainly female (6 male officers vs. 9 female)
Responders characteristics

- **Responders**: 80

- 85% specialised oncologists, 15% in training
- 55% practice in public & university hospitals
- mostly in Athens (52%), major cities (48%)

70% are mothers of 2 or 3 kids in 65% of cases
more than half (56%) are invited speakers/chairs in 1-5 greek meetings/ year but no more than 30% are invited in international meetings...
• the majority (74%) spend enough or a lot of time (5-10 and >10 hours per week) in continuing education and learning activities...
Women oncologists representation at work

Proportion of men and women in working teams

- The manager of the team is a man in 82% of the cases.
- 32% have some leadership position,
- with only 1 in 3 of those being department heads and the others having roles as assistant directors, coordinating, training or not specified.
Which factors do you find most satisfying in your work?

- Relationship with patients: 88%
- Intellectual stimulation: 69%
- Fighting a challenging disease: 51%
- Interaction with colleagues: 32%
- Opportunities to higher positions: 18%
- Prestige of medical profession: 15%
- Financial aspects: 6%
As a female oncologist, what do you think you can uniquely bring to the medical oncology profession?

- Multi-tasking ability: 46%
- Holistic view of the disease: 39%
- Smoother communication with patients: 32%
- Understand the "human side" of disease: 31%
- Practical organisational skills: 28%
- Ability to listen to and enter in dialogue: 22%
- High professionalism: 22%
- Effective management of working team: 20%
Communication with patients

One in two women oncologists (51%) reported seeing >5 new patients in a typical week.

On average, how long do you spend per session with each patient, after the initial assessment?

- <10 mins: 1%
- 10-20 mins: 48%
- 21-30 mins: 35%
- 31-40 mins: 8%
- 41-50 mins: 2%
- >50 mins: 5%

During a patient visit, on average what percentage of your time is spent listening to your patient's feelings and/or concerns?

- No time: 64%
- <25% of visit time: 20%
- >50% of visit time: 1%
- 25-50% of visit time: 15%

1% of visit time
As a woman oncologist, what do you think are the 3 main challenges to your career progression?

- Finding a balance between work & family: 63%
- Managing family commitments: 47%
- Difficulty to spend time abroad for research: 45%
- Barriers to travel to international meetings: 43%
- Men perceived as natural leaders while women as team members and supporters: 25%
- Cultural gender prejudice due to misconceptions about family responsibilities of women: 25%
- Maternity leave/difficulties coming back to work: 13%
- Financial constraints/ lower salaries: 13%
- None of the above: 2%
Which of the following programs aimed at women professionals would you advise your professional society to implement to support career development of women oncologists?

- Mentorship programs: 38%
- Flexible education/fellowship programs: 35%
- Network of female oncologists: 30%
- Soft-skills training: 27%
- Dedicated seats for women in committees: 25%
- Online career development tools: 22%
- Family friendly facilities at congresses: 15%
- Bonus for re-entering work place after maternity leave: 15%
Conclusions

• first survey among women oncologists in Greece

• although women have an increasingly significant presence in the oncology workforce in Greece, they remain under-represented in decision-making roles, as in Europe and worldwide

• many similarities with our European counterparts are highlighted regarding career challenges and satisfaction factors from the profession
Conclusions

• The ESMO W4O initiative and national initiatives such as ours, not only ‘map’ the problems but

• advocate for actions needed at national and international levels
• to bridge and reduce any gender inequalities in career advancement,
• for changes to promote work and family balance,
• for support of young oncologists with organized but flexible training and mentorship programs,

• and for policy changes in order to recognize and develop women oncology leaders...
We are grateful to all women colleagues in oncology for their participation in the survey and the Forum and to HeSMO and ESMO for their continuing support.
1st Forum W4O-Hellas
Sunday, 12th October 2014
‘Megaron Mousikis’, Athens Concert Hall, Athens-Greece