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PhD in Medical Sciences
2018-2019

INVITATION to the Public defence of

Lore DECOSTER

To obtain the academic degree of '**DOCTOR OF MEDICAL SCIENCES**'

Geriatric oncology: targeting older patients with cancer.

Thursday, 5 September 2019 at 5 p.m.

In Auditorium **Piet Brouwer**

Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Laarbeeklaan 103, 1090 Brussels

How to reach the campus Jette:

<http://www.vub.ac.be/english/infoabout/campuses>

Summary of the dissertation

Physicians treating cancer are confronted with a growing group of older patients. With the aging of the population in the western world, the incidence of older patients with cancer is estimated to rise even further. Treatment decisions for older patients with cancer are often extremely difficult because these patients are underrepresented in clinical trials, resulting in a lack of adequate treatment guidelines. In addition the aging process is very heterogeneous with regards to functionality, cognition, comorbidities and poly-pharmacy. The chronological age does not always correspond to the biological age of a patient. The currently used scales in oncology as well as routine clinical approach fail to evaluate the different aspects specific for older patients with cancer. Therefore there is a need for research in older patients with cancer in order to identify fit from unfit patients, to select patients for specific treatment strategies, to support patients during treatment by performing directed interventions and to follow up patients during treatment.

The current thesis aims to contribute to the improvement of the care for older patients with cancer. The first aim is to increase the knowledge on the necessary steps needed for the evaluation of older patients with cancer. The thesis focuses on the first four steps of the comprehensive geriatric assessment process including geriatric screening, geriatric assessment, recommendations and adherence to recommendations, as well as on health related quality of life in older patients with cancer. The second aim was to arrive at practice guidelines, implementable in the oncology care pathways.

Curriculum Vitae

Lore Decoster studied medicine at the Limburgs Universitair Centrum in Diepenbeek and at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel in Brussels. She graduated in 2002 cum magna lauda. After training in internal medicine, she started in 2006 her training in medical oncology. In 2008 she started as a staff member at the department of Medical Oncology in the UZ Brussel with main focus on lung cancer.

In 2008 she became interested in geriatric oncology, which is the topic of her PhD thesis. Her research resulted in more than 30 peer-reviewed manuscripts. Lore Decoster is national representative for Belgium and member of the Science and educational committee of the International Society of Geriatric Oncology (SIOG) and member of the editorial board of the Journal of Geriatric Oncology. She is also member of the Oncogeriatric task force of the Belgian Society of Medical Oncology (BSMO).

Lore Decoster is also a member of the steering committee of the Belgian Precision network and of the steering committee of the Oncodistinct network.