Colleagues told me that I should really try to get into the MCCR Workshop because it was fantastic but that it would be hard work. They lied about none of that!

The first day started with lectures from experts in the field, the entire faculty was introduced and I could not believe the amount of expertise that had gathered in the quiet woods of Zeist! The PDG sessions were great because everyone had time to listen and discuss each other’s protocols while the faculty had critical comments that were of great value in improving the protocol. It was very useful for me to learn about the other participants’ protocols and see which steps they took regarding different hurdles that had to be taken in their protocols. The faculty was always willing to get into more detail outside the PDG’s and the 'meet the expert' sessions. It was great that they were available all through the day AND night and that they were very easy to access. During the workshop some great ideas for other research opportunities came to mind just by being able to discuss my current protocol with experts in different fields of research.

What I did not expect, but was actually quite nice was that there were not many other surgical oncologists and this sometimes forced me to really see things from another angle, which gave me different perspectives on parts of my protocol and on protocols from others as well.

The other thing I really liked is that during the week you talk to a lot of people from different nationalities who are all trying to make the best of their protocol. It is very interesting to talk about how things are taken care of in their home countries and what great differences there are in the organization of clinical and research work between different countries and hospitals. And the nice thing was that you would get to talk about the other important things in life as well and how everyone manages to set their priorities and organizes their lives.

The night sessions working on the protocol may seem a bit harsh but since there are always some partners in crime it was not that bad. The woods of Zeist gave a good opportunity to clear your mind by going for a stroll or a run.

In short, the workshop was hard work, getting in contact with experts in the field, networking with other fellows and writing a really good protocol.