

**EUROPEAN SCHOOL
OF SOFT TISSUE SARCOMA SURGERY**

*** *ESSTSS* ***

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A European Society of Surgical Oncology Training program



EUROPEAN SCHOOL OF SOFT TISSUE SARCOMA SURGERY

AIMS

- To provide high quality, structured, basic and advanced **training** in surgical approach to soft tissue sarcoma.
- To **certify** proficient knowledge of applying candidates in the scientific basis and clinical practice of soft tissue sarcoma care, specifically multidisciplinary decision-making and surgical management. (European Certification in Soft Tissue Sarcoma Surgery)

ESSTSS Board

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DEFINITIONS

Soft Tissue Sarcoma Surgery: Field of Surgical Oncology dealing with the knowledge of mesenchymal neoplasms, and their clinical management in a comprehensive fashion, ranging from their molecular basis and pathological characterization to multidisciplinary clinical management. Soft Tissue Sarcoma is a family of diseases, which includes retroperitoneal sarcoma, limbs sarcoma, trunk sarcoma, and GISTs. Basic and clinical research are an integral part of this discipline.

BACKGROUND

The European School of Soft Tissue Sarcoma Surgery (ESSTSS) has been approved as an initiative within the **European Society of Surgical Oncology (ESSO)** proposed as a joint venture between different reference centers in Europe specialized in the treatment of soft tissue sarcoma (STS). The project has also been endorsed by the Connective Tissue Oncology Society (**CTOS**).

The ESSTSS serves the need and the demand to provide adequate and structured training in the surgical management of STS, a field that has peculiar characteristics within the surgical oncology community. These tumours are rare, often diagnosed at a late stage and often initially mismanaged. In the recent past there have been moves

to centralize training in centres of excellence where large volumes of tumours may be treated, leading to an increase in experience and expertise. Training in the surgery of these tumours is of difficult to obtain and has no formal recognition. The small number of cases seen in units limits experiential learning and this may have a detrimental effect on outcomes. This has been seen in most other cancer types (oesophageal, pancreatic, low rectal, hepatic). In addition their heterogeneity from a molecular and anatomic standpoint means that treatment protocols and multidisciplinary best practice are highly variable and must be tailored to the individual in each case. In addition, revolutionary advances have been made in the last decade regarding the surgical treatment of retroperitoneal STS. Presently, aggressive multivisceral resection has been recognized as the standard approach to primary retroperitoneal STS both in ESMO and NCCN guidelines.

Surgical resection of retroperitoneal STS has been traditionally performed by general surgeons in peripheral or oncologic institutions; while surgery of limb and trunk STS has been the prerogative of orthopedic or plastic surgical oncologists. For these reasons a specific training in STS surgery has never been considered to date.

Recent advances in sarcoma surgery have achieved revolutionary improvements in patient survival, within reference centers where a comprehensive approach to STS as a whole is warranted.

Moreover international collaboration between reference centers has been critical in this process, and has also included transatlantic collaborative efforts.

As a result of this process reference STS surgical centers received in the past few years increasing requests of observership and training experience from all over Europe and beyond.

ESSO is the European leader in Surgical Oncology Education and Training. It provides high-quality, advanced courses and masterclasses and has a vast experience in the certification of Surgical Oncology knowledge in conjunction with the UEMS, through the yearly administration of the European Board of Surgery Qualification (EBSQ) in Surgical Oncology examination.

The currently available resources for scientific and educational events available for physicians involved in STS care includes:

- **Connective Tissue Oncology Society (CTOS) Annual Meeting:** multidisciplinary scientific society with round approach to STS basic science, pathology, surgery, medical oncology, radiation oncology. Annual Meeting is held every year alternating European and North American venue.

- **ESurge:** educative wet clinic event for surgeons with live surgery for retroperitoneal sarcoma, limb sarcoma and GIST, with discussions on strategic approach by a multidisciplinary panel of experts. ESurge is held every second year in Paris.
- **ESMO Sarcoma & GIST Conference.** Educational event marked by a comprehensive faculty from both Europe and the U.S.A., including both top sarcoma clinicians, pathologists and biologists. The goal is to merge the clinical and the translational perspectives into a single high-profile educational event making it a unique opportunity in rare cancers such as STS & GIST. This conference is known as an excellent place for international networking and collaboration, featuring discussions with the key opinion leaders in the field. It is held every second year in Milan.

Therefore, we believe that a structured surgical school will encounter an as yet unmet need in the worldwide sarcoma community, and we propose ESSO to become the leading sponsor of a European program of training and certification in this special field of surgical oncology.

This initiative is led by 4 European reference centers with documented experience in STS care, with established collaborative activity over years:

- **Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori**, Milan, Italy (Dr. Alessandro Gronchi, Dr. Marco Fiore)
- **Institut Curie**, Paris, France (Dr. Sylvie Bonvalot, Dr. Dimitri Tzani)
- **Royal Marsden Hospital**, London, UK (Dr. Dirk Strauss, Dr. Andrew Hayes, Dr. Myles Smith)
- **Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Nederlands Kanker Instituut**, Amsterdam, the Netherlands (Dr. Frits van Coevorden, Dr. Jos A. van der Hage)

STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

The ESSTSS will be led by a **Board** composed by:

- **ESSTSS Director:** One person responsible for all aspects in the development of the School and its activities. He/she is elected within the Board members for a duration of four years.
- **ESSTSS Administration (support and logistics):** provided by the ESSO (office capabilities, rooms for business meetings, etc). Funding for operational costs (travel for ESSTSS meetings, administrative costs, etc) will be covered by ESSO's educational budget and candidate fees; however, methods to raise ad hoc funds for this purpose will be sought from external sponsorship.
- An **Advisory Committee**, with the role of regulating program contents, assisting in candidate selection and evaluation, accreditation of tutors or any other aspect as required by the School Director. Composed of:
 - Chiefs of the Surgical Sarcoma Program at each participating institution
 - A second Attending Surgeon at each participating institution with the role of local tutor
 - Two ESSO Education and Training Committee representatives

ESSTSS Director, tutors or Advisory Committee members will not receive any honoraria for their work, but will have reasonable costs derived from their responsibility covered.

ACTIVITY

ESSTSS will provide basic and advanced training to selected applicants through residential access to full activity in participating centers and sponsorship of scientific events strictly related to soft tissue sarcoma oncology. Upon successful completion of this program, the candidate will obtain the European Accreditation on Soft Tissue Sarcoma Surgery.

Any available educational or CME initiatives specifically targeted to STS already developed or to be developed by CTOS, ESMO or single participating center initiative will be recognized as ESSTSS activities, after Advisory Committee approval.

ESSTSS will be able to develop further educational events or activities in STS beyond the ones already included in the ESSTSS Training Program.

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Ideal Candidate profile

- Active Surgical Oncologist with a preferential interest in Soft Tissue Sarcoma, seeking advanced, structured training in the field.
- Surgical Oncology Fellows with a preferential interest in Soft Tissue Sarcoma, seeking basic and structured training in the field with opportunity of basic and clinical research.
- Candidates must have completed a general surgery residency and basic surgical oncology training and/or show a continued dedication to surgical oncology in their clinical practice.
- The ideal candidate should be involved or have solid plans to get involved in an established or new Sarcoma Program.
- The candidate has to guarantee proficiency in English and/or in the local language for each visited center.

Admission

Candidates will be selected by Board upon evaluation of CV. To be accepted application must obtain positive evaluation by at least three Board members and no negative evaluation.

If admitted, candidates will be requested to hold an interview with a member of the Advisory committee, in order to plan rotations between centres.

Program Duration

Two years (recommended).

Training Methodology

A tutor/mentor recognized by ESSTSS as proficient to carry out this task will be assigned to each candidate for guidance, tutoring and planning of the candidate's training activities.

The tutor/mentor will ensure provision and availability of the required activities to the candidate providing a rotation within at least 2 established Sarcoma Programs recognized by ESSTSS (either under his direct supervision or that of another person designed by him/her) and shall be directly responsible for the tutoring of the research project to be carried out by the candidate.

The tutor/mentor shall ultimately be responsible for certifying successful completion of the training activities by the candidate.

Evaluation of trainee's progress in knowledge and skills will be provided by local tutor during program.

As a general rule, no more than 1 trainee should be present at the same time in any accredited center.

Training Activities and Requirements for Accreditation

- **Clinical training** at established Sarcoma Program recognized by ESSTSS (suggested duration between 2 and 6 months in each of assigned centers; if any period will be ≥ 3 months, then the candidate will have to visit at least three centers)
- Direct participation in the execution of Retroperitoneal Sarcoma surgical procedures (at least 4 procedures at each center)
- Direct participation in the execution of limb and truncal STS surgical procedures (at least 10 procedures at each center). For each procedure a structured assessment will be completed by the supervision surgeon ending with an assessment of whether the surgeon is competent to undertake such cases with or without supervision. At intervals of 6 months during the training and at the end of the 2 years, a review of all cases will be carried out by the training committee as part of the assessment and it will be noted that progress has been made and that the candidate has achieved competency in both surgical and non surgical objective assessments.
- Direct participation in the execution of GIST surgical procedures (at least 2 procedures at each center)
- Participation and attendance to ad hoc multidisciplinary conferences ("tumor board") for presentation, discussion regarding patient selection and therapeutic decision- making (at least 3 meetings at each center).
- Presence in in-hospital postoperative follow up is highly encouraged.
- Registration at local medical registration council will be on candidate responsibility.
- Attendance to at least one CTOS Annual Meeting
- Attendance to Esurge
- Attendance to ESMO Sarcoma & GIST Conference

- Attendance to at least one ESSO Annual Meeting, Sarcoma track
- Other specific events may be allowed and recognized for accreditation, after Advisory committee approval
- Formulation and elaboration of at least 2 research projects under the supervision of an established Program recognized by ESSTSS, to be presented at a congress and submitted to publication at a peer-reviewed journal. Presentation to ESSO Annual Meeting and submission to EJSO will be encouraged.
- One of previous research projects will become the final thesis.

All activities must be registered in the candidate's log book and each activity must be validated by the tutor; for courses and congresses the candidate is expected to present the attendance certificates to the ESSTSS Administration.

An **Examination Committee** shall ultimately be responsible for certifying successful completion of the training activities by the candidate. The Examination Committee will be composed by the School Director, the tutor, and other two members of the Advisory Committee.

Fees

An administrative fee to be paid by the candidate for his/her registration in the School. Reduced fee will be available for ESSO members.

A proposal is made for especially reduced registration fees for the courses and congresses mandatory for accreditation.

Training Materials

The basis and the theoretical contents to be covered by the training program will be outlined and a selection of recommended publications will be offered to applicants. This will include a list of recommended reading and relevant key papers.

Accreditation (or Certification)

Provided by ESSO.

Requirements: successful completion of the European School of Soft Tissue Sarcoma Surgery in two years' time (recommended)

Figure 1 ESSTSS structure and activities

