

**Report of a visit to Radiumhemmet, Karolinska Universitetssjukhus 8.-18.3.2004
Annika Auranen, Kvinnokliniken, Åbo Universitetssjukhus, Finland**

General remarks and conclusion

I want to thank NFOG for the scholarship, which made my visit to Radiumhemmet possible. I also want to thank my hosts at Radiumhemmet, and particularly Professor Bengt Tholander for a very good organisation of the visit. The biggest difference between our clinics (Radiumhemmet and Åbo Universitetssjukhus Kvinnoklinik) derives from the different background of Gynecologic Oncologists in Sweden and Finland: In Turku, we diagnose, operate and give chemotherapy, but have very little to do with radiotherapy, whereas Radiumhemmet treats mainly patients diagnosed and operated elsewhere, and is particularly focused in radiotherapy. Therefore, the biggest emphasis on my visit was put on seeing various aspects of radiotherapy.

To take home, I got some new chemotherapy treatment schemes (vulvar cancer, allergy prophylaxis for carboplatin retreatment), some technical hints regarding Wertheim operations, a better understanding of radiotherapy treatments and booklets of treatment recommendations of gynecological cancer in the Stockholm region. I also got to know the personnel at the gynecologic oncological policlinic, and invited them to visit our department, and our new hospital building for Department of Oncology in Turku. In all, the visit was very rewarding.

Practical organisation of the visit

Host and main organizer of the visit was Professor Bengt Tholander. He had planned a two week schedule, which covered various areas of activities at Radiumhemmet and four operation days at the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Particular emphasis was put on following radiotherapy treatments and planning. Hosts at the radiotherapy unit were Drs Ann-Cathrin Hellström and Katharina Beskow. Host at the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology (operations) was Dr Kjell Schedwin. I stayed at the Wenner-Gren Center. On one evening, Professor Tholander took me to see an excellent play “ Tid att ge sig av” at Stadsteater. The play told about an ovarian cancer patient, was very intense and perfectly matched the theme of my visit.

Gynecological oncologic policlinics

I followed professor Tholanders cytostatic treatment policlinics. The treatment schedules and the way to arrange treatments are very similar to treatments in Turku. A recent recommendation of prophylaxis of allergic reactions to carboplatin has been issued at Radiumhemmet, this I copied as something to maybe follow in our department also. We also discussed about how the co-operation

with Radiumhemmet and open care (öppen vård) is organized. In my view, this was better organized and more established than what we are used to in Turku.

A also followed Dr Hellströms and Dr Beskows policlinics, which were mainly follow-up visits. I got a copy of the follow-up schema used in Radiumhemmet for follow-up visits, which gives some reference to our department as we are replanning the follow-up schemes.

Radiotherapy unit

In Finland, we do not have low dose brachytherapy. At Radiumhemmet, I got to see how a low dose brachytherapy was given: insertion of the applicators in narcose, taking the patient in an isolated room and start of a 20 hour treatment. I also got to see narcose examinations of cervical and vaginal cancer patients and the planning of the treatment. I got to see several external radiotherapy treatment plannings (both cervical and endometrial patients) and got good explanations of the topic by Drs Beskow and Hellström.

Cancer operations at the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology

The original plan consisted of 4 days at the operations. However, operations coincided with some interesting radiotherapy treatments, so I actually followed only 2 days of operations. I got to see a good example of a Wertheim operation, and got some good technical hints and different ways of doing things than what I have been taught in Turku. Otherwise, the biggest difference in operations seems to be that we perform more lymphadenectomies (basically for all endometrial and radically operable ovarian cancer patients). We seem to be performing also more laparoscopic cancer surgery.

Meetings

The schedule at Radiumhemmet involves various meetings: radiotherapy planning meetings, radiology meetings, pathological meetings where tumor samples are looked at together with pathologists, surgeons and gyn oncologists, section meetings. Much of this meeting activity is something that we also have, and it was interesting to see these meetings and also learn about the topics that were discussed in these meetings.