

Brussels, May 13, 2008

Dear All,

I have been often introduced as the “memory” of the EORTC. This is somehow exaggerated, but I would like to shortly tell you why I have been so proud to be part of the adventure of the EORTC. The EORTC Data Center (created in January 1974) was the first in Europe. Professor Henri Tagnon, one of the founders of the EORTC, wanted such a Data Center to be established in Brussels, on the model of the ones existing in the US.

In June 1973, I was asked by Dr. Maurice Staquet to come and work at the EORTC. At the time, there were hardly any offices, any money, but I accepted the challenge. There were also no statisticians nor data managers. The first statisticians came from the US or Great Britain and the first data manager was sent to the US to learn the job and teach the other ones upon her return. The Data Center then grew. In the late 80's we were 28. Professor Françoise Meunier, upon her arrival in 1991, created the EORTC Fellowship Program and hired medical doctors to support the scientific activities of the EORTC.

Now we have grown to be more than 150, covering all the aspects of clinical trial research. From the EORTC Data Center emanated a lot of innovations to be proud of :

- The first NCI-EORTC Symposia were organized in Brussels under the impulse of the Data Center. They have now evolved into the EORTC-NCI-AACR Symposia.
- The creation of the International Society for Clinical Biostatistics. This Society has become now one of the most prestigious in the world.
- The Data Center also initiated the first workshop on European research against AIDS. Pr. Montagnier and Pr. Piot were among the European specialists taking part in this meeting in the very early 80's, when the general population was not even aware of the AIDS epidemic. The first two European Conferences on clinical aspects of HIV infections were then organized by the Data Center.
- As already told, the EORTC Fellowship Program was created by Pr. Françoise Meunier. Up till now this has allowed more than 100 medical doctors, statisticians and health scientists from all over the world to do a research project here and then to become the EORTC “ambassadors” in their country. This Fellowship program today sums up more than 150 years of research at a very high level.

I have been very proud to be part of all this, to organize these symposia, to take care of personnel and research fellows, to design and decorate your offices, and even to do the accounts ! The EORTC has also given me the privilege of meeting very special persons who have become friends and who are here today or scattered in the big world outside. Last but not least, I would like to thank all of you who have helped me over the years.

To you all, one last thought. Over the years, I have met great scientists. They have not always been famous. Everyone starts little. This great person in a few years can be you.

I wish you all only the best.



Dominique Eeckhoudt