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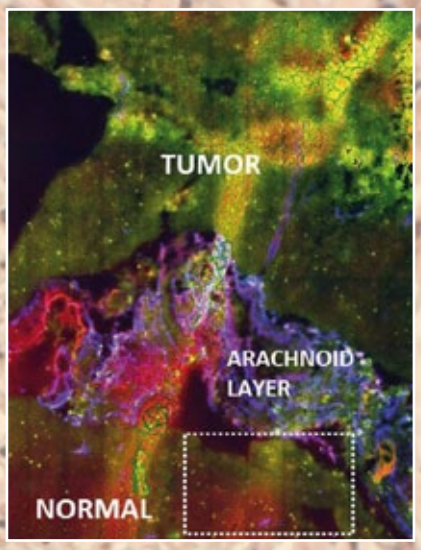

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National Societies: The Belgian Association of Neuro-Oncology

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The Belgian Association of Neuro-Oncology (BANO) was founded on May 26, 2005, in order to promote multidisciplinary treatment of brain tumours and research in neuro-oncology. At that time, more than 200 patients per year were diagnosed with glioblastoma in Belgium and the EORTC had just presented data showing the benefit of radio-chemotherapy with temozolomide for glioblastoma. This association aims to be a meeting point for all physicians involved in the treatment of brain tumours and also for other societies involved in neuro-oncology research. At present, BANO has 110 members coming from different specialities such as neurosurgery, radiation oncology, medical oncology, pathology, radiology, nuclear medicine, psychology, and nursing. This non-profit organisation is financed by membership fees and project-related grants.

This association has 2 missions: (1) to promote neuro-oncological research and (2) to improve the health care standards for the multidisciplinary treatment of brain tumours patients.

BANO has been involved in several clinical research projects. Initially, the association provided access to temozolomide for patients with relapsed grade-III gliomas. We have set up a randomised national clinical multicentre trial evaluating the potential benefit of prolonged adjuvant treatment with temozolomide for glioblastoma patients. 62 patients have been included and the final results will be available soon. Another project is under discussion with the EORTC regarding our participation in the intergroup study exploring the role of temozolomide in the post-operative setting of grade-III tumours harbouring a co-deletion of 1p and 19q.

To pursue our mission of permanent improvement of health care standards for brain tumour patients, every year we organise a national symposium. This gives us the opportunity to invite top-class speakers who are all experts in their respective fields. Our last symposium (2013) focused on the current impact of genetic biomarkers in the diagnosis and treatment of primary brain tumours. These events usually attract around 100 physicians who are daily involved in the treatment of brain tumour patients. During this event, the Belgian Brain Tumour Support (BBTS) offers 2 prizes for young researchers in order to promote research. We have also built a website to provide physicians with all relevant information regarding the national symposium, guidelines, and contact details of physicians involved in neuro-oncology.

The association is also committed to defending the interests of brain tumour patients in various medical societies and on the level of the regulatory authorities in a growing number of occasions. Recently, BANO was involved in a project set up by the Ministry of Health to define criteria for hospitals to take care of rare cancers such as primary brain tumours under the guidance of the KCE (Kennis Centrum/Centre d'Expertise).

We thank all the physicians dedicated to neuro-oncology research and health care for their support of the association. In the future, BANO wishes to continue to contribute to all the work that is still needed to improve the survival and the quality of life of our beloved patients.

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