

# A training programme in Gynaecological Oncology. The Portuguese state-of-the-art

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## SUMMARY

At present the training in OBG spends 6 years. The priority for the first 2 years is Gynaecology and the next 2 years mainly focus on the training in Obstetrics. This training takes place in a "host and basic training department". In the 5th year the resident moves to another department ("supplementary training department") where he/she concludes his/her training in OBG. To conclude his/her 6th year of residency he/she has several optional training with a duration of 3 to 12 months. The first period of training in GON spends 3 months, in the 2nd year of residency, and the second one spends 3 to 12 months in the 6th year of residency. At last it is foreseen a 3rd period of training in GON, which must start after the degree in OBG, of 36 months (fellowship) to reach the degree of Sub-Specialist in GON. The capacity of the departments for training in GON depends on the training level's period and a minimum criteria were settled for each of them. For example, in the whole country only 3 to 5 departments are recognized for the Sub-Speciality training.

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At present the training in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (OBG), in Portugal, lasts 6 years. For the first 2 years the priority is given to Gynaecology and the next 2 years mainly focus on the training in Obstetrics. This training takes place in a "host and basic training department". In the 5th year, the resident moves to another department ("supplementary training department"), where he/she concludes his/her training in OBG. To conclude his/her 6th year of residency he/she has several optional training periods with a duration of 3 to 12 months.

The first period of training in Gynaecological Oncology (GON) lasts 3 months in the second year of residency, and the second period lasts 3 to 12 months in the 6th year of residency.

At last it is foreseen a 3rd period of 36-month of training in GON "fellowship", which must start after the degree in OBG, to reach the national degree of sub-specialist in GON.

The first and second levels of training in GON have specific goals, which focus the knowledge and performance that any OBG must have in this area.

The fellowship - which allows the resident to reach the degree of sub-specialist - includes different training and is distributed as follows:

Compulsory training in:

Gynaecological Oncology	24 to 29 months	(80%)
Radiotherapy	2 months	(6%)
Medical Oncology	3 months	(8%)
Pathology	2 months	(6%)

Optional training in:

Digestive Surgery	3 months
Urology	2 months

The goals for performance are set-up to each training and year with a gradual improvement of complexity. The training programme includes specific skills for each of the training periods. As for example, we give a brief summary of the performance goals in GON:

1. to know the necessary diagnosis techniques:
  - a) to establish the diagnosis for the worst diseases;
  - b) to establish the extension of the tumours;
  - c) to evaluate prognostic factors;
  - d) to evaluate the existence of associated pathology, which can influence the increasing of the disease or have implications on its treatment and prognosis;
  - e) to evaluate the response to the treatment;
2. preoperative evaluation and preparation of the patients:
  - a) general evaluation of the surgical conditions;
  - b) specific evaluation of the pathology;
  - c) advice and explanation;
  - d) prophylaxis to any possible adverse effects;
  - e) genital, vesical and intestinal preparation;
3. training in surgical hysteroscopy and laparoscopy;
4. performance in surgery within the scope of all kind of genital and mammary cancer (minimum surgical curriculum);

5. postoperation monitoring;
6. ability for treating some postoperative adverse effects;
7. ability to take part in terminal care:
  - a) pain treatment;
  - b) anxiety treatment;
  - c) nausea and vomiting treatment;
  - d) collaboration with the family and the general practitioner;
8. knowledge of the legal and ethical aspects, concerning the treatment and clinical study.

With reference to the minimum surgical curriculum to be accomplished in the 3-year fellowship, besides assistance to surgery, it is required to perform:

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|---|----------|
| a) surgery of endometrial, ovarian and tubal cancer | 25 cases |
| b) radical hysterectomy                             | 12 cases |
| c) radical vulvectomy                               | 3 cases  |
| d) radical mastectomy                               | 18 cases |

On the other hand as for research and teaching it is required:

- a) participation on research projects;
- b) publication of, at least, 5 papers, where he/she must be the first author of 3 of them at least;
- c) elaboration of a thesis at the end of the fellowship;
- d) participation in the pre-graduate (optional) and post-graduate teaching.

With regard to the knowledge goals, they come from the compulsory attendance of a theoretical course with the duration of 120 hours in the first year and seminars with the duration of 80 hours in the 2nd year.

The theoretical course includes:

- introduction to Oncology;
- epidemiology, prevention and early diagnosis;
- diagnosis of the gynaecological and breast cancer;
- treatment of gynaecological and breast cancer;
- follow-up and recover.

The final evaluation includes the evaluation through a test on theoretical knowledge, as well as a continuous evaluation of the performance, which includes the technical performance ability, the interest in professional increase, the professional responsibility and the relationship at work. Each training has a specific evaluation. In this evaluation the submission of a thesis is still included.

The recognition of GON training departments varies according to the training level and minimum criteria were settled for each of them.

The attribution of recognition is estimated by a methodology of its own, which includes:

- setting-up of the programme of the training curriculum;
- inquiry to the departments in order to evaluate their capacity for assistance, teaching and research;
- site-visits to the departments by an independent committee;

- creation of a database;
- definition of the minimum characteristics of a department to be recognized for training;
- classification of the departments, according to their training recognition;
- setting-up the national necessities in sub-specialists;
- definition of the educational capacity of each recognized department;
- support to the theoretical and practical education.

Considering this methodology the Portuguese situation is:

- (a) since 1991, the Health Ministry has recognized the "Special Studies in GON", with the duration of 2 years. After 1998, this programme will be identical for the whole country and the training period will last 3 years. The theoretical course will be centralized at one of the recognized institutions;
- (b) since 1993, three inquiries have been sent: the first (1993) to the 56 departments of OBG in Portugal; the second (1995) to the 22 departments recognized for OBG training; the third one (1996) to the 11 departments, where GON is more differentiated;
- (c) in 1994, the 56 departments of OBG were visited by three independent committees (3 to 5 members, each committee);
- (d) a database was created;
- (e) the minimum characteristics of a recognized department are set-up, for the three levels of training in GON;
- (f) on what concerns GON the 56 departments of OBG are classified as follows:
  - Level 1: 9 departments
  - Level 2: 5 to 6 departments
  - Level 3 (Sub-Speciality):
    - 3 departments with total capacity for training
    - 2 departments with partial capacity for training
- (g) the estimate necessities for our population of 10,000,000 inhabitants is of 50 sub-specialists in GON (gynaecological cancer + breast cancer);
- (h) the educational capacity of the departments recognized for GON is of 5 to 6 fellows, every 3 years;
- (i) after 1998, a committee for educational follow-up will be created.

Since 1991, the Health Ministry recognizes the "Special Studies in GON" with 2 years of residency and only for specialists in OBG. This residency has been held at regional level, mainly in Coimbra and Oporto.

Until the end of 1995, 26 sub-specialists had accomplished their education in GON.

The Medicine Faculty of Coimbra has had a "mastership" in GON these four years and, until the end of 1995, certificated the title of "Master" to 10 sub-specialists.

The Health Ministry has opened competition for posts at hospital medical career with GON profile.