

Confidences de Salon



ERS President, Guy Joos, is Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine and Head of the Department of Respiratory Medicine at Ghent University Hospital Belgium. He has a clinical interest in general pulmonology, with a focus on obstructive pulmonary diseases, and has undertaken translational and clinical research into asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease for over 25 years.

Did you always dream of being involved in medical research/healthcare?

When I started studying medicine my dream was to become a general physician. In the first 3 years of my studies, I very much enjoyed discovering the life sciences, especially physiology, pharmacology and genetics. My first patient contact occurred in a department of internal medicine, where I learned to combine basic scientific principles with patient care. And within internal medicine, I very much enjoyed the lectures on pulmonary medicine. Once I started to specialise in internal medicine, the same professor who gave these lectures proposed that I should start clinical research and train in pulmonary medicine.

What is the best advice you had when you were starting your professional career?

During my specialisation in internal medicine in Ghent, I was lucky enough to be mentored by two professors in pulmonology who taught me both sides of the role of an academic physician, enabling me to become both a clinician and a researcher.

What advice would you give someone at the beginning of their professional career?

Keep an eye on both the basic and the clinical science in your discipline. Then focus and choose

a subspecialty, and network with your colleagues, both nationally and internationally.

What has been the greatest change to make a difference in your field in your lifetime?

Over the past 35 years, we have experienced a real revolution in the various aspects of medical imaging. Moreover, we can now see the results of our ever expanding knowledge of molecular biology, immunology and genetics, which mean that we are now able to offer new treatments to our patients, for instance to treat severe asthma and lung cancer.

What do you foresee being the next great thing and what do you foresee as being the biggest challenge in your field in the next 10 years?

Scientific knowledge is increasing and increasing, while technological possibilities continue to expand. To keep medicine affordable for everyone, we will have to find the right balance between investments in “precision medicine” and in “public health”.

What is your favourite scientific breakthrough from any field?

I would like to mention several breakthroughs that recently came into the clinic, but are the result of

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ERS President, Guy Joos, gives an insight into his life <http://ow.ly/T0uq304yC36>



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more than 20 years of basic and clinical research. For me the game changers are: 1) immunotherapy for lung cancer; 2) anti-cytokine antibodies for severe asthma; and 3) cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator modulators for treatment of cystic fibrosis.

How do you see the future of the ERS?

ERS is a large community of clinicians, healthcare professionals and scientists. It organises one of the largest respiratory congresses in the world. Together, and in cooperation with the European Lung Foundation, whose mission is to bring together patients, the public and respiratory professionals to positively influence respiratory medicine, we are a big family that is very well positioned to fulfil our mission to improve respiratory health. Our expanding international membership and the creation of a research agency will further broaden our capacity to improve lung health through science, education and advocacy.

When are or were you happiest?

I can mention numerous moments! They include: obtaining my MD, and afterwards my PhD; becoming and being a father (and now a grandfather!); seeing my students' progress and flourish; having a nice evening with my wife, my family, friends or colleagues; and during biking or sailing trips.

What do you dislike most?

Hidden agendas; decisions that are made in a hurry; and e-mails that takeover your agenda.

Who has been your greatest inspiration?

Professionally, my three mentors (my teacher in mathematics and my two professors in pulmonology). Personally, my wife, my three children, my family and friends as well as my three mentors.

Whom would you most like to thank?

My wife and family for their patience and support.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Becoming an academic physician.

Who are your favourite authors?

During my holidays, I love to read books by both Dutch and international authors, including Julian Barnes, Philip Roth, Mario Vargas Losa, and more recently, Haruki Murakami.

Where would you most like to live?

I live near Ghent, a lively university and cultural city in the region of Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium, less than 300 km from Paris, London, and Amsterdam. What a wonderful place to live!

What is or was your greatest journey?

I can think of several. The first was a trip to Australia to visit to J. Black and S. Anderson in Sydney in the 1990s. The second example is my trips to Scandinavia, driving (on several occasions) by car from Belgium to Norway, Sweden and Finland, back in the 1970s. And the final example is my numerous holidays in my neighbouring country, France.

What qualities do you appreciate most in your friends?

Honesty.

What qualities do you appreciate most in your colleagues?

Honesty.

What is your personal motto?

Do right and fear no one.

What do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses?

My strengths include patience, listening and consensus building; my weaknesses include impatience and no time to listen.