A Foundation for the future

It is estimated that the New Year’s Concert of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (Das Neujahrskonzert der Wiener Philharmoniker) has a global audience of around 1 billion people in the nearly 50 countries to which it is broadcast every January. It is the world’s New Year’s greeting. It is, therefore, appropriate that I am able to send you this New Year’s greeting from Vienna and report on a significant event that took place here during the recent ESMO Congress.

On 30 October 2004, ESMO officially launched a new charitable foundation that aims to improve cancer care in Europe and beyond. The purpose of the ESMO Foundation is to provide much-needed funds for a wide range of activities, with the ultimate aim of making the best treatment available to every cancer patient.

ESMO’s commitment to education [1, 2], clinical best practice [3–7] and helping its members meet the needs of every cancer patient [8, 9] is, I believe, self-evident and whole-hearted. The ESMO Foundation will maintain these core values while working to support ESMO activities such as the organization of scientific conferences; publishing of journals, books, and guidelines; development of training courses; awarding scholarships and planning of seminars for patients and their relatives.

To achieve these things, substantial financial support is needed. I hope and believe that the ESMO Foundation will help to channel the funds needed for fostering education and research to meet our goals. Several sponsors have already expressed interest in making unrestricted educational grants to support the ESMO Foundation. Professor Richard Herrmann, Head of the Oncology Department of the University Hospital in Basel, Switzerland, has been instrumental in obtaining the first donation of €100 000, presented by Dr Bernhard Ehmer, Vice President of Business Area Oncology at Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. Subsequently we have received further support from Merck KGaA and from Ortho Biotech. I am grateful for their support.

It is only fitting that a concert should be the event through which the Foundation was launched. On 30 October 2004, the Wiener Virtuosen (Vienna Virtuosi), 12 musicians who are among the principal players of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, together with soprano Ildiko Raimondi, gave a special performance at the Wiener Konzerthaus (Vienna Concert House) for ESMO members and guests. Most who were present that night will for a long time remember the artistry of these performers. Moreover, the power of oncology to change lives was given human form by the performance of the flautist, Günter Voglmayr, his first since his diagnosis and treatment for cancer. It is my belief that the step taken that night in launching the ESMO Foundation has the potential to change the lives of cancer patients throughout Europe and beyond.

I wish us all a happy and successful New Year.

H. Ludwig
Chairman of the ESMO Foundation, Austria

References