

Marjolein Smidt

WG Member

Professor Marjolein Smidt is a distinguished leader in the field of oncological surgery, specialising in the treatment and research of breast cancer. As a professor of surgical oncology at MUMC+ (Maastricht, the Netherlands), she is committed to advancing the clinical and scientific aspects of breast cancer care.

With decades of experience in breast cancer surgery, Professor Smidt's guiding philosophy has always been to provide care that is 'just as good, but less'. This approach is rooted in her research, which has revealed that certain traditional treatments offer no significant survival benefits. Smidt therefore advocates a shift in clinical practice that reduces overtreatment, focusing instead on effective yet less invasive treatments that maintain patient safety and quality of life.

A central focus of her work is investigating axillary de-escalation, with the aim of providing equally safe treatments with less long-term morbidity. She has played an instrumental role in studies investigating non-invasive nodal staging using advanced imaging techniques such as PET and MRI. These techniques have the potential to provide the same diagnostic insights as sentinel node biopsies or axillary lymph node dissections, but without the need for surgery. The theme of de-escalation is also central to the BOOG 13-08, RISAS and MINIMAX studies, which examine the role of axillary treatment in node-negative and node-positive breast cancer patients in standard and neoadjuvant settings.

Professor Smidt is leading important research into the role of the microbiome in systemic cancer treatment. Her work focuses on how the composition of the gut microbiome can influence treatment responses and reduce side effects in patients with breast and colorectal cancer. She has also introduced a research line on "lifestyle and cancer" and instigated the recently launched guideline on this theme.

Beyond her clinical work, Professor Smidt is a highly accomplished researcher with over 250 publications in oncological surgery and breast cancer. She has supervised over 30 PhD students, thereby contributing to the development of the next generation of leaders in the field. She is also a respected editor for several medical journals and plays an active role in various professional organisations. These include serving as treasurer and educator at the UEMS (European Union of Medical Specialists), BRESO and various guideline and research committees, teaching on multiple courses and holding a position as vice-chair of the MCCC (Maastricht Cancer Centre).