

Master Vitality and Ageing

YEARBOOK 2017-2018

On ageing research and scientific leadership



Leiden University
Medical Center



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

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INTRODUCTION

Dear students,

After one year of hard work you've finished the master's Vitality and Ageing. From the start in September 2017 onwards, we have enjoyed our shared interests in ageing and in older people. You have studied hard and viewed many kinds of perspectives on vitality and ageing. Some things were easy and some topics were very difficult to understand. But again and again, we saw your eyes twinkle with the desire to learn everything about ageing.

Of course, this year was not only filled with learning theoretical content. You did many kinds of assessments in communication, varying from interviewing older persons to leading a press conference about a crisis situation. You even have built your own escape rooms during the serious game. You've also interviewed scientific leaders of the LUMC, and asked them about their role as researchers in the ageing field. Some of these profiles are published in this yearbook. In addition to studying knowledge and learning skills, you went on orientation visits. Our study trip to Cologne was really fun! In this book you'll find lots of memories we made together.

From the start, we were impressed by your interests, energy and talents. We saw your development from student to young professional. What an enormous individual progress you have made this year. Seeing these huge steps in your personal development, we are very proud. We are confident that you will have a colourful career in our greying society!

On behalf of the master's team of Vitality and Ageing,

Prof. dr. Jacobijn Gussekloo | director of the master
Dr. Arko Gorter | coordinator of the master





My internship at the University of Copenhagen

By Berivan Yildiz

I have always wanted to do a part of my education abroad and get to know other cultures, so I thought it would be a great experience to finish my V&A masters in another country. I did my internship at University of Copenhagen, department of Public Health. There, I investigated resilience among Turkish older migrants living in Copenhagen. I conducted 10 interviews with Turkish older men and women. I recruited them in a

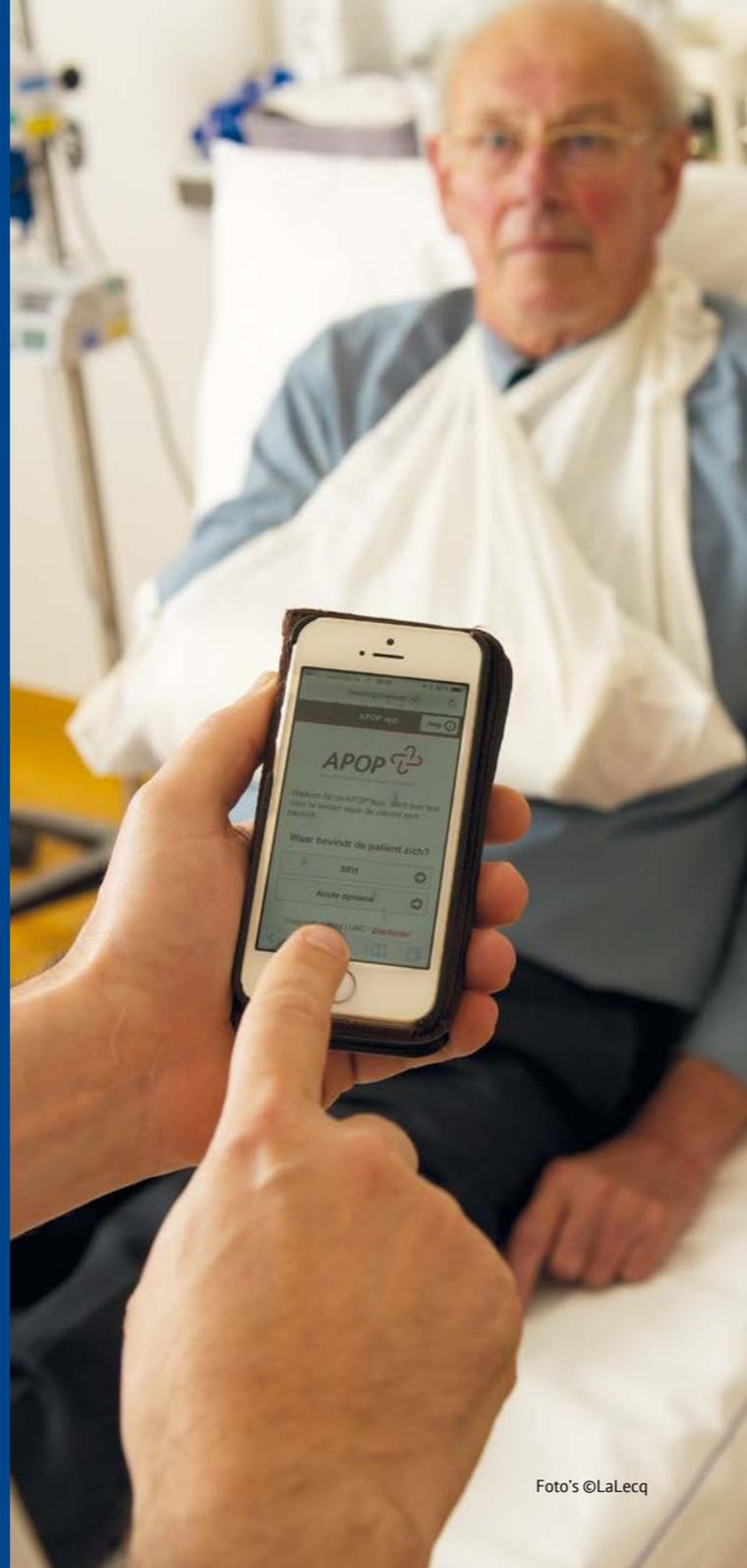
socioeconomically deprived neighbourhood and a local mosque in another area of Copenhagen. I have interviewed amazing people about how they dealt with hardships during their life, how they managed to overcome these and how they used these also to deal with age-related challenges.

During my internship I was allowed to work at two locations; at the university campus and at another building of the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, a very modern and sustainable building. There I met many other students, PhD-students, Professors and other colleagues and I was inspired by all of them. Especially by my own supervisor, who was a very humble and independent woman, and definitely a role model for me and many other students.

I felt very at home both in Denmark and at my internship. There was a good atmosphere everywhere and people were very kind and down to earth. The highlights of my internship were definitely the people I have met and who have inspired me, learning about the Danish culture and habits, and the surprising lovely weather during almost the whole internship period ☺.

Going abroad definitely broadened my horizon and made me think about an international career as well. I improved my English language skills and managed to live in another country. It was a wonderful experience!





Foto's ©LaLecq

My internship at the Emergency Department of the LUMC

By Bregje Korpershoek

The past twelve weeks, I've spent most of my time at the Emergency Department of the LUMC, which sounds pretty cool! My research question was about the clinician awareness of geriatric vulnerability in older patients presenting at the ED. This was a sub analysis of the APOP-study, a big prospective study to improve care for older ED patients.

My internship consisted of two parts: observing at the Emergency Department for a few weeks, followed by analysing the data collected at the ED. It was fascinating to see the daily routine at the ED and how the ED staff managed to succeed every day in providing care for acute (older) patients. My shifts of observing were between 8am till 4pm or 4pm till 11pm, which

was quite a long time! However, I learned a lot about the work atmosphere at the ED and the data collection of this study. The transition to analysing the data behind a computer in one of the uninspiring rooms of the LUMC was quite big, but the other internship student made my days better ☺. What I enjoyed most about my internship was the amount of freedom I had during a 'work day'. Especially the lunch- and coffee breaks...

My internship has taught me to work independently, learn more about all the different aspects of doing research and become familiar with the 'work paced life'! Now I know that, in the future I definitely want to combine my job as a doctor with doing research. ■



Memoirs of an internship student

By Daan Kooijman

As the summer vacation was tentatively waiting around the corner, the internship and final thesis were the last hurdles of the rite of passage from bumbling Bachelor student to a fully-fledged Master of Science. And while some of us ventured out into the world, determined to find out what the world looks like at the other side of the equator (or prime meridian, although that requires decidedly less travelling), I merely peeked into my wallet, shook my head and tried to convince myself that it was in fact home sweet home. And sure enough, in retrospect I can attest that 'twas sweet indeed.

For my internship, I found myself gently welcomed into the warm embrace of our very own LUMC's department of Psychology. From the so-called 'office garden', which has a distinct lack of foliage yet a superfluous number of computers, I commenced my quest to barely scrape by with a 5.5 (just kidding, of course). That's when it struck me that the reason why there were so many computers in the office garden is actually because they come in really handy when trying to do research. After that bolt of enlightenment, I truly set out on the lonely path that is biomedical research. Luckily, as it turns out, you can be lonely together, so the other students and employees at the office garden did their best to create a much more pleasant environment. Of course, I should not fail to mention my supervisor who has always patiently guided me back to the path of scientific righteousness whenever I brazenly went astray in a bout of youthful folly. And after many a struggle with the statistics, many a tussle with the text and many a cuddle with the coffee machine, the result was a thesis to be proud of.

Of course, that nutshell merely contained the process of writing a thesis and I can feel your eager eyes brimming with anticipation regarding the actual content of the thesis. Well, my dear reader, allow me to tell you just that. During my ten weeks of internship, I ventured to discover factors that indicate the presence of apathy in the oldest old. And before you say: "Why care about apathy?", allow me to elaborate. Apathy is a psychological phenomenon characterised by a distinct lack of activity, interest and emotions, a flattening of one's personality. And this in turn is generally associated with worse medical outcomes. Since there is still much unknown when it comes to apathy, especially in the older population, I burdened myself with the arduous task of sitting behind a computer all day and attempting to bring a bit more clarity to it all. And believe it or not, that actually kind of worked out. In the end, I uncovered an association between apathy and cognitive decline, which means that people with dementia tend to be more apathetic (or vice versa). Of course, a lot more mental elbow grease is required before apathy is fully understood, but small steps also help pave the way forward.

All in all, having conquered those final hurdles, I am able to look back with satisfaction on a time of personal and professional development. Being a functional part of the gargantuan machine that is scientific research was a true final test of independence and knowledge. And now, as a Master of Science in all but name, seasoned by ten weeks of intense internship, I impart this final nugget of wisdom to you all. The joy is in the journey, therefore insignificant test results are merely opportunities to experience that joy all over again. Also, don't do drugs, kids. ■

The Leyden Academy on Vitality and Ageing

By Janne van Erp



In the last three months of the master's program I developed my qualitative research skills and improved my fitness because of a successful internship at the Leyden Academy on Vitality and Ageing. The Leyden Academy is a knowledge institute in which researchers with different backgrounds work together to increase knowledge concerning vitality and ageing. During my internship I performed a qualitative research into the participants' experiences of the social interaction and



benefits of participation in Vitality Clubs in Leiden and Ulft. I combined conducting interviews with participant observation to gather data for this research. For the observations I took part in the exercise clubs myself as well, both as participant as well as coach. Exercising with the participants of the Vitality Clubs always resulted in a smile on my face when I was on the way back to the Leyden Academy! Uniting conducting research and being active among older people matched my interests and made this internship an enjoyable end of the master's program. At Leyden Academy I felt welcome from the start. Because of the lunches with all people working at the Leyden Academy I got to know everybody in a short

time. I was also invited to attend research meetings and because of the open doors you walked in someone else's room for a talk easily. It was interesting to see how everybody worked for an own project, but was aware of others and their projects as well. This working culture with good contacts and a relaxed ambiance is something I hope to find in a future job as well! All in all, I developed my research skills further and experienced how it is to work in a knowledge institute. During this internship I found out and confirmed that because of curiosity I enjoy performing research, however, I mostly enjoy being among the older population and I am interested in the work / implementation after performing research. ■





My internship at the VUmc in Amsterdam

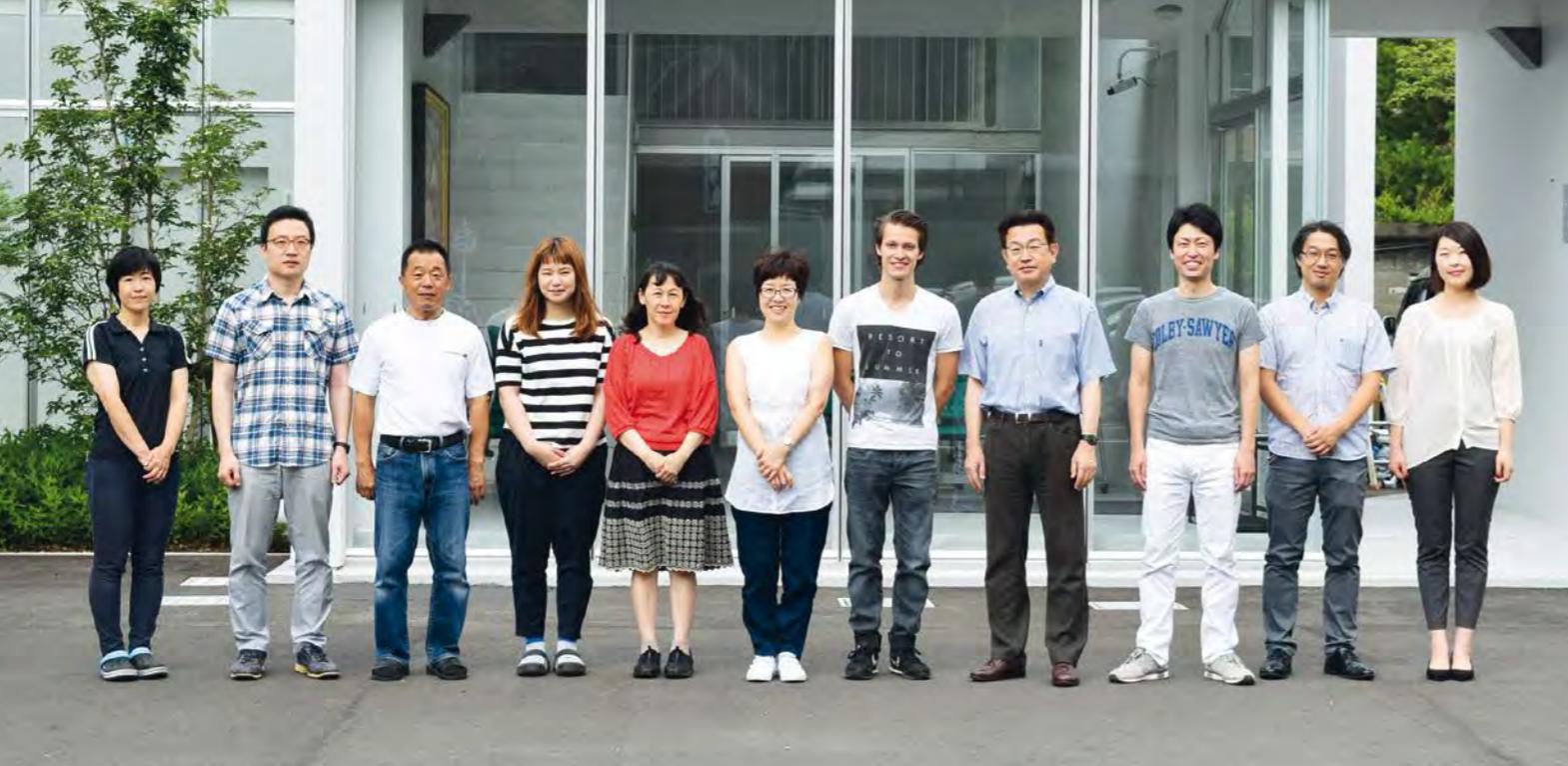
By Laura Gorter

I had a hard time deciding where to do my internship. I eventually chose to do my internship at the VUMC in Amsterdam. The main moment I decided to choose the VUMC was after my first orientation conversation with Mike Peters, a doctor at the internal medicine department. He was really enthusiastic and we discussed many different options to do my internships. Eventually, I chose to do my internship at the geriatric

medicine department, in collaboration with the cardiology department. The aim of the research was to find out if there was a relationship between some echocardiogram values and frailty in heart failure patients older than 60 years.

I want to bring you with me on a typical day during my internship. At around 7.45 I left my house and biked to the VUMC, because at 8.00 the meeting to discuss all patients at the department started. After this meeting there would sometimes be education. After this at about 9.00 I went to my little room to check if there were patients visiting the outpatient heart failure clinic for me to screen for frailty, cognitive impairment and the self-measured health status. Most days there were 2 or 3 patients which could be included in the study. Before and after taking the questionnaires, I read literature, did some analysis or wrote little pieces of my thesis. At about 16.00 most of the time I left the VUMC to go home. After 10 weeks I came to the conclusion that I made the right decision to choose for this internship as I learned a lot and really enjoyed my time! ■



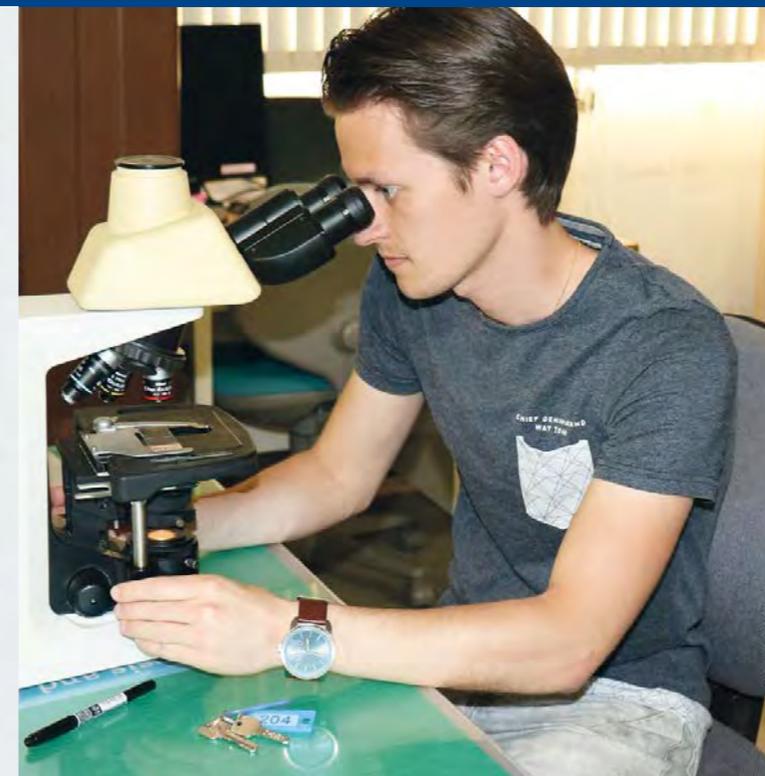


An international adventure: My master thesis at Nagasaki University in Japan

By Leon Martens

I was able to finish my V&A master with an internship at the Nagasaki University in Japan. For 13 weeks I worked at the department of pathology for research on the anti-neoplastic effects of certain FoxO genes in the liver. The head of the department, professor Shimokawa, had given a lecture in Leiden that sparked my interest. This, as well as that Japan is an amazing country culture-wise, was the main reason I wanted to do my internship in Japan.

The work ethic in Japan was a little different than I imagined. It is usually portrayed as harsh and hardworking, but the people in my department were very relaxed and kind. Mistakes were allowed and I could simply try again. However, they do make long hours and taking a 30-minute nap on your desk is totally normal.





The effect of Tovertafel on quality of life in elderly people with moderate to severe dementia

By Manon Kuipers

I did my internship at the company Active Cues, who is responsible for the creation of the Tovertafel. The Tovertafel is an interactive table created to reduce apathy in elderly people with dementia, which might eventually lead to an improvement of quality of life for this group of people. I did a qualitative study using interviews and observations to give answer to the following research question: In what way does the use of the Tovertafel Original contribute to quality of life for people with moderate to severe dementia living in a care home facility according to caregivers? If you are interested in the results, feel free to read the article I wrote about it for my master thesis!



Some of the most memorable moments of my internship certainly were the welcome and farewell party I was given by the department. It made me feel so comfortable and at home in this foreign country. I do think that an internship abroad is a great way to gain experience not only in your academic skills but in life in general as well. I think this internship has showed me I am truly fond of doing research. During the past 3 months I have met some wonderful people from all over the world and learnt to appreciate different cultures. I will bring home memories that will last a lifetime! ■



I felt like Active Cues was the right match for me to finish my Masters, because of my interest in implementation and the effort they do to implement their product. The first week I was in the office it already felt like I was working there for way longer. The company is full of young and energetic people, who are very interested in each other and work very hard to make the Tovertafel a big success. →

THESIS STORIES

They have 6 core values that everybody in the company should strive for: *Doordacht, Echt, Sensitief, Enthousiast, Verbindend* and *Ambitieuus!*

Since they are growing out of the office with over 40 employees already (they will move to a new office in September), there was not much space and I worked on a flex workplace in the hallway on my own most of the time, but we lunched together every day. Since there are a lot of creative minds in the company there was a lot going on, which seemed a bit chaotic sometimes. To create structure there was a company stand up meeting each Monday to tell the colleagues what you've been working on this week, and there are new company wide goals made every 4 months to make sure everyone is working towards the same goal.

During this internship I developed myself further. I had to contact all participants for the interviews myself, and learned that it can sometimes take a while before you get answer. Furthermore, I developed my interview skills and really enjoyed the observations which I had never done before. Almost all people I spoke with were very enthusiastic about the Tovertafel and it was amazing to see with my own eyes what this table can do to people with dementia. It was mind-blowing to see how people who were not moving and were sitting with their eyes closed all of a sudden started to pay attention to what was happening on the table, started to play and talk to others and sometimes even stood up to have a better reach on the table. I did not expect to see any movement from those people, let alone hear their voices. It was truly magical to see what an enormous change can be created by using this Tovertafel!

I would like to conclude with a big THANK YOU to everyone from Active Cues for giving me the opportunity to do my internship at their company and for making me feel at home! Keep on working towards your beautiful goal of bringing 10 million moments of happiness every day in the care sector! ■



TOVERTAFEL



all had a significant impact on me, both in terms of my research findings and personally. I spent my days alongside my supervisor, Ailyn Delgado, working in the Montané Anthropological Museum, which was an interesting place to do my internship considering I could see some of the oldest objects in Cuba and learn a little more about its history during breaks.

What I liked most about my internship was that everything went to my pace, which is not something all researchers can say. Fortunately, I was very independent and I felt like my investigation, apart from being valuable to Cubans and policymakers (I hope), allowed me to satiate my own curiosities and interests.

I received invaluable support from both of my supervisors, university professors and staff, the informants, and even acquaintances! Everybody was interested in the topic and everybody wanted to help; by helping me find more informants or helping me understand Cuba and its society a little better. I came to re-realize shortly after commencing the investigation how important it is to have contacts and constantly build on your professional and personal networks. ■

My internship at Havana University

By Silayan Bertomeu

I had the pleasure of doing my internship in Havana University. I was part of the faculty of biology. However, within the faculty, there were different lines of research, and my investigation was more related to anthropology. My study's aim was to explore the ageing experiences of adults (50+) as informal caregivers of senior citizens in Havana's most aged municipality. Finally, I conducted 14 interviews which



Exploring the cryptogram of medicine

Prof. dr. Wilco Achterberg | By Manon Kuipers

Prof. dr. W.P. Achterberg is an inspiring leader in the field of ageing. From behind his desk he has a view on his wall, covered in pictures of people who he considers as important for ageing and ageing research. They are an inspiration for his work. Prof. dr. Wilco Achterberg has been a professor of institutional care and geriatric medicine at LUMC since 2010. But how did he reach this position?

“Medicine is a crossword puzzle, and geriatric medicine is a cryptogram. Just a bit more challenging, just a bit more fun. No guidelines, you have to invent everything yourself.”

After his studies in 1989, he worked in a military hospital as part of his obligatory military service. Via a medical employment agency, he later started a course in nursing home medicine. That is where he discovered his passion for geriatric medicine. In geriatric medicine he found the challenge he was looking for. Research turned out to be one of his passions as well. He did his PhD in 2004 and kept doing research ever since. With his research he wants to focus on the most vulnerable groups among the elderly population. At this moment three themes are being explored: Pain and quality of life in people with dementia, geriatric revalidation, and palliative care for people with dementia.

“We’ve been striving for people to get older, but we did not realize that older people would struggle with this longer life.”

“A leader has to be stubborn sometimes and take a left turn where the mainstream goes right.”

“In principle all research is teamwork.”

Ageing

What does ageing mean to you? Most people associate ageing with negative thoughts. Words like decline and deterioration are often mentioned. But Wilco has a refreshing view on ageing. For him ageing is related to wisdom, tranquility and control. This view has changed over the years, as he became older himself. A big challenge that comes with ageing is the meaning of life. Nowadays, older people are struggling with the reason of their existence. This suggests that we failed in supporting them socially.

Another hot topic nowadays is vitality. But what is vitality? According to prof. Achterberg vitality is: ‘Still being able to participate in society.’ It is not just a physical function, it is a combination of multiple processes that lead to the ability of participation. Health is one aspect, but social network and a good economic situation are important as well.

Leadership

What are qualities of a good leader? According to Wilco a good leader is not afraid to make decisions. A good leader is someone who is supportive to their team members. A good leader is a strategic thinker, someone who thinks about the bigger picture. A good leader has the confidence to admit to mistakes and leaves room for others to make mistakes as well. Because if you never make mistakes, you will never learn.

How does it feel to be leader of a team? Prof. Achterberg is the leader of a team with senior researchers as well as junior researchers. Being the leader of these teams is something that he mostly enjoys. It is difficult for him when he cannot connect to a person, and he must make the decision to let this person go. Therefore, when hiring someone he always looks at the possibility of making a connection and having a click with this person.

Luckily his teams function very well. They are enthusiastic, and everyone grows in what they do. Taking care of each other and working towards the greater goal are important values in teamwork. You have to be a team player to be in Wilco’s team.

“You have to avoid that you become a ‘one-trick-pony’. As a leader you should always be the one to inspire your team.”

What characterizes prof. Wilco Achterberg as a team leader? First of all, not being authoritarian. ‘You must do this!’ is something you would not hear him say very often. His style of leadership is based on trust. Another keyword is deadlines. Deadlines are very important. When he is busy he needs deadlines to help him remember everything he has to do.

Besides this, having fun is also essential in team prof. Achterberg. He likes to celebrate accomplishments with his team. Therefore, there are regular drinks and ‘bitterballen’ for the teams. Another important aspect of Wilco’s way of leading is that he wants to keep renewing himself. Therefore, this autumn he will go on an academic leave for three months. In those months he wants to connect the themes he is working on, and find inspiration to continue his research with new insights.

Prof. dr. W.P. Achterberg is an inspiring leader in the field of ageing. From behind his desk he has a view on his wall covered in pictures of people who he considers as important for ageing and ageing research. They are an inspiration for his work. Now may his words be an inspiration for the work of others.

An inspiration to continue doing research.

An inspiration to explore geriatric medicine.

An inspiration to, maybe one day, solve the cryptogram of medicine. ■

The man behind the interdisciplinary elderly specialized outpatient clinic

Prof. dr. Gerard Jan Blauw | By Turki Addahash

“My leadership is in the background.”

In life, things go wrong all the time. No matter how perfectly things come together, there is always room for unexpected surprises. The concept that “anything that can go wrong will go wrong” is known as Murphy’s law. It’s especially true when you want to set up an appointment with such a busy and active figure of the elderly health care world. Murphy’s law was finally combated and I had the chance to meet Professor Gerard Jan Blauw. Prof. Blauw is an internist, elderly care specialist, researcher, and the man behind establishing Bronovo Behandeladviescentrum Ouderengeneeskunde- the interdisciplinary elderly specialized outpatient clinic in The Hague. The interview took place in a meeting room of the internal medicine department at the LUMC. I arrived a few minutes earlier than scheduled and he was there having his morning coffee welcoming me with a nice friendly smile, and a humble attitude. This helped a lot in breaking the ice and minimized the stress I was feeling- knowing that I was meeting a prominent leader in providing health care to the elderly population.



Prof. Blauw took me through his journey of contributing to the field of geriatrics and elderly care medicine that started in the mid 90s. After devoting more than 10 years to researching the aging society, participating in clinical trials and population studies, he set up the “first one and a half line of care centre for elderly people” in the LUMC. He wanted “to put into practice what he had learnt from clinical trials.” He was concerned about older patients who had multiple chronic co-morbidities and were stuck between their GPs, who had limited knowledge about geriatrics, and hospitals that focused on providing acute care. The clinic was thriving but he wanted to expand and make it more efficient. He focused his attention towards starting an independent outpatient center specialized in different fields of medicine that provided healthcare to the elderly. This idea was brought into reality in The Hague, where prof. Blauw established the interdisciplinary Bronovo Treatment Advice Center for Geriatric Medicine, a first for the Netherlands.

Prof. Blauw heads the center and works with a multidisciplinary team of 20 healthcare professionals in different fields such as geriatrics, cardiology, neurology, neuropsychology along with nurses, trainees, and social workers. The center is the biggest outpatient clinic for older people with cognitive disorders in the Netherlands. Prof. Blauw and his team also run clinical trials investigating the line of heart-brain axis with a focus on people with heart failure as a risk factor in developing dementia. The center provides an academic environment for internists and hospitalists who would like to specialize in elderly care medicine.

“My leadership is in the background” is how prof. Blauw describes how he leads his team. After developing the mission and vision of the center with his colleagues, he likes to observe from a distance. He trusts that his team members are professional and will achieve the tasks assigned to them. The team is driven by their intrinsic motivation of wanting to understand and help older people. Prof. Blauw thinks this is the key to the success of his team. If anything goes wrong, open discussions and good communication are the strategies he uses to solve any issues. Issues, he says, seldom happen as they have been working together in harmony for over 10 years.

Driven by passion, prof. Blauw is still heavily invested in his time, commitment and dedication to the elderly population. He continues to leave many footprints in this field and there is a long list of those who have benefited from his care, service, and passion. He has been very inspiring to many health care professionals and I am one of them. As a GP, I would definitely consider joining his team and working at his center. Maybe it is about time for me to learn Dutch! ■



Stamina and perseverance, using grit as motivation to make projects flourish

The academic road of a passionate all round leader

Prof. dr. Jacobijn Gussekloo | By Amber Schoenmakers

"I remember that I found this very interesting, combining scientific research and witnessing how my grandmother aged with dementia."

Prof. dr. Jacobijn Gussekloo is involved in over 25 national and international projects in which she has various roles. Prof. dr. Jacobijn Gussekloo has a grit work ethic, meaning that she tries to use her passion towards the projects she is working on and the people involved in these projects. With the use of her perseverance she is able to overcome obstacles in order to achieve her goals. Using this growth thinking mind set, prof. Gussekloo is involved in the various functions, departments and projects. She is working at the LUMC as a Professor of Primary Care , director of the master's Vitality and Ageing, combined with principal investigator of the LUMC-research line on geriatrics in primary care. In addition to these functions, she is chair of the committee of population screening of the Health Council of the Netherlands, chair of the national GP-Advisory Board of the Dutch College of General Practitioners, and member of the supervisory board of care organisation ZorginHouten. Internationally, prof. Gussekloo is board member of the

Thyroid Studies Collaboration and chair of the International Science Advisory Panel of Scientific Challenge Ageing Well in New Zealand. This is but a glimpse of the activities she has as a leader in the field of vitality and ageing of prof. dr. Gussekloo.

The start of a career in the field of ageing

Prof. dr. Gussekloo developed her interests in ageing and general practice during her final years of medicine when she started her scientific internship at the Leiden 85plus Study. During this period, her grandmother got diagnosed with dementia. “I remember that I found this very interesting, combining scientific research and witnessing how my grandmother aged with dementia”. After successfully finished her Medical School, prof. Gussekloo started with the specialisation to become general practitioner. At the age of 28 in 1994, she kick started her career as acting general practitioner at various practices.

The turning point in her career was in 1996 when she had a funny conversation with prof. dr. Knook, professor of Gerontology at Leiden University, at a ‘borrel’: “You can start working for me as a researcher and continue your work as acting general practitioner, but only if you can start first thing tomorrow morning”.

She took this opportunity and it turned out to be a new path in the career of prof. Gussekloo. In the same period, prof. dr. Rudi Westendorp, started working at the department Gerontology of prof. dr. Knook. Together, they were tasked to bring new life into the Leiden 85-plus Study where she did her internship years before. She became the project manager of the new research design and decided to start with a PhD trajectory. In the year 2000 prof. dr. Gussekloo defended her PhD thesis while still combining her job as acting general practitioner and having kids. She realised that combining her career as general practitioner with scientific research and a young family was a bit too much. Therefore, in 2001 she made the decision to focus her career on science and challenged herself to write, as she calls it, a paper with a ‘big bang’. She succeeded, in 2004 she was published an important paper about subclinical hypothyroidism as first author in the highly rated journal JAMA.

“You can start working for me as a researcher and continue your work as acting general practitioner, but only if you can start first thing tomorrow morning.”

“Vitality in teams intrigues me, I’m always analysing: Ok, so this is the team. How do we keep this team vital, what can we do to make this collaboration work? Vital teams are resilient and persevere during bad weather, celebrate success together, and are there for each other when needed.”

Finding grit and stamina in teams

During my interview with prof. dr. Gussekloo, she told me that in everything where she puts her time in, she aims to do it right and is willing to work hard for her goals. “If I’m going to do something and put my effort in it, I want to stand for the projects that I’m working on, and I want it to be good. Otherwise, what’s the point?” This gritty attitude with stamina flows as a red line in her career. “And the funny thing about that mind set is somehow you’ll find the people with the same drive too. And if you achieve those goals together, it is the most fun you can have.” She continues to explain her fascination for analysing teams in all the various projects in which she’s ever involved: “Vitality in teams intrigues me, I always ask myself: Ok, so this is the team. How do we keep this vital, what can we do to make the collaboration work?” She continues to talk about her perception on vital teams. “Vital teams are able to be resilient and persevere during bad weather, celebrate during success together, and be there for each other when needed.”

The future

With the reflection on the career of prof. Gussekloo and the end of the interview approaching, I was wondering: What more is there to achieve after this amazing academic road? She told me that her next step would be to grow in a formal leadership position. “At the moment, I’m mostly informally leading various projects, I would like to grow in a position in a more formally organised way. When you are hierarchal in a leading position, you will have more responsibilities and have a broader scope. You will also have more influence to get the things done. Also to influence the work culture at your department. When you become older, and start to grow more grey hairs yourself, you will be able to act in more than just one function.” ■

A career with a detour

Dr. Diana van Heemst | By Sandra van de Venne

On a warm summer day, I meet with dr. Diana van Heemst in her office at LUMC. She enthusiastically shares her story on her background and her research: a transition from fungi, to mammalian cells to humans.

“She enthusiastically shares her story on her background and her research: a transition from fungi, to mammalian cells to humans.”

Dr. Van Heemst obtained her doctorate in Biology at the University of Wageningen and part of her research took place in Paris. To my surprise she tells me she studied the sexual reproduction of fungi, which at first sight does not have anything to do with ageing. The findings of her study showed that sexual reproduction relies on factors that are specific for sexual reproduction as well as factors that play a role in repair of DNA damage.

These findings led her to her next step to join the team of prof. Jan Hoeijmakers at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. Prof. Hoeijmakers was one of the worldwide leaders in DNA-repair research at the time. It was the time of the discovery of genes and mutations. The research of dr. van Heemst focused on the repair of DNA double stranded breaks in mammalian cells of hamsters and mice. At the same time, it was discovered in the Hoeijmakers lab that mice with insufficient DNA-repair mechanisms showed signs of accelerated ageing.



“This today is still her niche: the ability to make the translation from fundamental biological research to humans.”

These observations sparked a great interest in dr. van Heemst in the actual relevance of these findings for humans. In 2002, she applied for a position at LUMC, where she had her first job interview ever with prof. Rudi Westendorp and which led to a major career switch. At LUMC, a new project would start on the relevance of the findings from the research on model organisms to humans. This today is still her niche: the ability to make the translation from fundamental biological research to humans.

Transition to research on longevity in humans

When dr. Van Heemst started at LUMC a strong focus was appointed to genes. In Leiden, she started working on the Leiden 85+ study to study which varieties in genes were associated with health and sickness at high age.

In the meantime the Leiden Lang Leven (Leiden Longevity Study) started, in which research is performed on families whose members reach an extremely high age. The last 10 years dr. van Heemst has performed research on the clinical and physiological aspects of members of these families and their partners. What distinguishes them from their partners? What aspects of their physiology are different?

Especially the effect of hormones on longevity has the interest of dr. Van Heemst. Several hormones are produced by the brain and stimulate certain glands in the body, such as the thyroid. From research on model organisms, it was found that hormones are important regulators of the amount of energy which is put into our bodies to repair proteins, DNA-damage and fats as opposed to how much energy goes into actual living and for instance sexual reproduction. Hormones contribute in creating a balance. The more we invest in maintenance, the longer we may live. Since 2016, dr. Van Heemst acts as project coordinator of the international EU funded Thyrage research project that investigates the effects of thyroid hormone on a wide range of age-related diseases, which shows her great interest and expertise in this field.

It has been discovered in the Leiden Longevity Study, that people from long-lived families have better glucose and lipid metabolism and that they are healthier than others. People which are overweight are more prone to many metabolic complications and have a higher risk of complications or lifestyle-related diseases. Since 2 years dr. Van Heemst is also involved in the NEO study which researches causes for illness in people that are obese.

Leadership style

Dr. van Heemst manages 5-10 people on average. She is interested to know what people think, stimulates people to take control and always values the person for who (s)he is. So she provides lots of freedom, wants people to take their own responsibility and she searches for balance in what a person needs. Dr. Van Heems indicates this is an ongoing learning process.

Bridge

Dr. Van Heemst has a background in research in model organisms and this research has brought a lot. To understand human ageing however, she says, you have to study people. And that is what dr. Van Heemst does. She is always focused to understand. Much is already known from the research of model organisms, but what does it mean for human ageing and vitality? Not all results are applicable to humans. Much research is performed in mice for instance, while they are much different. For a woman who wanted to become a veterinarian when she was a teenager, she has come a long way since there are only few people who can operate on the bridge between clinical application and mechanisms research on mice, like dr. Van Heemst does. ■



The Power behind Empowering

Prof. dr. Pancras Hogendoorn, Dean of the LUMC | By Silayan Bertomeu

All around the world, across time, there have been people with a remarkable gift: that of leadership. From presidents and prime ministers to military commanders and spiritual leaders, these select few have inspired and moved masses to strive for their ideals.

“Creating the atmosphere where people can get the best out of themselves – that is leadership.”

Zoom in to a neat, quiet and spacious office at the Leiden University Medical Center on the 21st of March 2018 – a Vitality and Ageing master’s student interviews prof. dr. Pancras C.W. Hogendoorn to gain insights into his experiences as a modern leader. Prof. Hogendoorn not only holds the position of Dean at the LUMC, he is also a member of the executive board in this medical center, the chairman of the Netherlands Committee on Bone Tumors, a professor of pathology, and a guest professor in Oxford, Brussels and Bologna. Needless to say, prof. Hogendoorn’s outreach is wide. More importantly however, is that his outreach is invaluable.

To better understand the roles and responsibilities of a leader, the interview focused on exploring prof. Hogendoorn’s perceptions of good leadership, his experiences with managing a facility that is suffering from pressures due to the ageing society, and his biggest achievements as a leader. When asked about the most important qualities of a leader, prof. Hogendoorn states that

one should have a strategic view and lead by example, “so you have to show people what you mean by doing it”. He further explains, “the students are responsible for their own career but you need to be close to them [...] in order to help and give some guidance. [...] My job is to create an optimal atmosphere here in the LUMC [...] so you can explore yourself and become better and better with time. [...] That’s my job. [...] Creating the atmosphere where people can get the best out of themselves – that is leadership.”

“The inspiration to the next generation is the best thing you can do in your career.”

In addition to this, prof. Hogendoorn highlights the importance of being open-minded and adaptable as a leader. He states that it is important to know when to express your opinion because sometimes you need to give guidance, and other times you just need to listen and absorb the information detailed by your team or co-workers. Moreover, and especially in relation to elderly care provision, he reiterates the significance of working together and having integrated teams to ensure that care provision is based on quality rather than quantity. Understandably, he says, this takes time and a change in mind-set, which is a challenge.

Despite the obstacles he may face, prof. Hogendoorn leaves us with hope by showing that it is rewarding to be a leader. When asked about the proudest moments in his career, prof. Hogendoorn responds, “of course there are a number of papers I’m proud of but I’m even more proud that at least [...] five of my PhD students are professors somewhere else [...] I’m proud of my PhD students who are now somewhere in their career and I hope that in some way, they were a little inspired by me, the way I was inspired by my promoter [...] the inspiration to the next generation is the best thing you can do in your career [...] I would say I’m proud of prizes and important papers [...] but my real contribution is that I engineered a little bit the people coming after me ... the rest is nice for putting over there (on the shelf)”.

“With great power comes great responsibility.”

All in all, the interview with prof. Hogendoorn brought two quotes to life: the first, “with great power comes great responsibility”, but second (and more importantly), as John Maxwell said, “leaders become great not because of their power but, because of their ability to empower others”. ■

Tackling challenges in the varied group of elderly patients with cancer

Dr. Gerrit-Jan Liefers | By Laurie Warmerdam

A real leader, is not how dr. Gerrit-Jan Liefers would describe himself. 'I do not believe in leadership in research teams. It kills creativity.' He studied Medicine in Leiden and was trained as a surgeon in both The Hague and Leiden. After his training he resumed his career at the LUMC and was appointed head of the surgical oncology department in 2016. Within his research team, he is in charge of research applications as the principle investigator. 'Someone has got to do it!' Liefers also said he never intended to become a leader. However, Liefers has a feeling of great responsibility, which has brought him to where he is now. He could be described as approachable with a weakness for hard working people. He is a team player who makes decisions based on his intuition and common sense. He hates authority as he has a real people-minded approach; he believes a working environment should always be good.

"I do not believe in leadership in research. That kills creativity."

Cancer research is mainly performed in younger patients, which can lead to insufficient treatment for elderly patients. Therefore in 2009, Liefers began researching cancer in the elderly. The first project, FOCUS study, investigated cancer tissue in the lab combined with large databases of a regional retrospective cohort of elderly patients. Liefers explained that the difficulties of retrospective cohorts are the multiple associations that are



found, while causality is not always present. He went on to use these associations to set up the TOP1 study. The Tailored treatment for Older Patients study began in 2017 and was introduced to all national hospitals in the Netherlands.

Although Liefers might not think he is a leader, he leads this field of research. With the FOCUS and TOP1 studies, he is tackling the challenges of multi-morbidity and cancer in elderly patients. Initially, he asked himself:

“Why would the treatment of the elderly be the same for all patients?”

‘Why would the treatment of the elderly be the same for all patients?’ He views this group of patients as extremely heterogeneous and the differences in vitality between 75-year-olds are incredible to him. He believes that therapy should be adjusted for the individual patient. He went on to describe the value of risk reduction from chemotherapy or radiation is different for various patients, especially in the elderly. We should talk about the risks and how the patient weighs these. Liefers explains that not every patient wants the negative side effects of extra treatment for a risk reduction from 10 to 5% ‘Shared-decision making is a beautiful solution, but if we really want that, we should define new guidelines and have multiple treatment plans.’

With the TOP1 study, he is trying to provoke a revision of the current guidelines. This study investigates patients (70+) with ‘an ultra-low risk’ for in-breast recurrence of hormone-sensitive breast cancer and explains these risks to the patients. In this way, the patients are able to make their own decisions. If a patient values the 2% risk reduction, they will start treatment. But the first outcomes of the study show that most patients do not want the extra treatment. The future TOP2 and TOP3 studies might even explore more treatment options, for fit elderly patients who might benefit from extra treatment for example.

Research into vitality has also been on Liefers’ agenda. The CLIMBE study, which ended last December, assessed questionnaires in patients on physical, social and mental well-being over a 2 year period. As a result the impact of treatment on domains other than disease were determined. Cancer treatment has its downsides and elderly patients might not prefer treatment based on side effects. Liefers would like to let patients decide whether they would like to be treated, not solely based on treatment outcome and risk reductions.

The goals of Liefers’ cancer research are to improve the treatment for elderly, make it tailored and provide treatment plans for the whole variety and diversity of this group of patients. I am curious what changes his research will bring to daily practice and the care for elderly patients. ■

Inspiring words from prof. dr. van der Mast

Prof. dr. Roos van der Mast | By Warsha Jagroep

Professor in geriatric psychiatry, Ph.D. in delirium and a Ramaer- medal, not many women can say they own this, but professor doctor Roos van der Mast can.

Prof. dr. van der Mast started her career at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, where she studied Medicine and did her Ph.D. research on delirium. Since 2007, she works at the Leiden University Medical Centre as a professor in geriatric psychiatry, but also as a psychiatrist, and researcher. There is no average day for prof. dr. van der Mast. Every day is different, with different challenges. Prof. dr. van der Mast loves the versatility of her work to teaching, having contacts with her patients and doing research. In her overflowing agenda, she has fortunately still been able to make time for me.

'You cannot start too soon with vital ageing', prof. dr. van der Mast tells me, when I asked her what is important in ageing vitality. 'Forming social relations is something you already do at an early age, it prevents you from becoming lonely and it gives you sufficient assessment and feedback from outside. Moreover, having a balance between relationships, physical activity, and a nice job, provides a solid base and helps you with setbacks, and you will

*"Sometimes you have to
put your ego aside to
enable others to grow."*



“Hard work has brought me to this position, but hard work can also be a lot of fun!”

“For a major breakthrough, small steps are needed.”

get them when you grow old’, says the strong, confident woman who is sitting opposite me.

Prof. dr. van der Mast has always had the dream of becoming a real leader. In 2003, she took the step to become a part of an Academic Hospital, which formed the basis to achieve her goal to reach a leader position. Coordination, teamwork and having an overview are important in this position. However, you also have to be able to share and award others, according to prof. dr. van der Mast.

‘Hard work has brought me to this position, but hard work can also be a lot of fun’!, said prof. dr. van der Mast, when I asked her about the less nice aspects of her work. ‘If I look back now, being a leader affected my social network a bit: friends, movies, and concerts. You realize it at the moment, but you think career is important now’. Luckily she will have more time for her social relations when she retires. Finding a balance between working hard and maintaining social contacts is a beneficial advice, which prof. dr. van der Mast has given me.

Looking back at the career of prof. dr. van der Mast, she did not only gave me advices how to reach a leader position but also how to age vitality. I will keep these advices in my mind when I will start my career as a leader. ■



From the understanding of the ageing process to an understanding of appropriate care for the older population

Dr. Simon Mooijaard | By Janne van Erp

A sketch of a doctor, researcher and leader dedicated to the optimisation of the care for older patients.

With the goal of becoming a doctor, Simon Mooijaart studied medicine in Leiden. Although he enjoyed working in the hospital, he also enjoyed performing research. Pursuing his newly-found passion for internal medicine, he knew his future would contain quite a bit of research and a PhD position was a way into the internist education. Thus, he immersed himself in the world of research and obtained a PhD in the process, after investigating hereditary factors that play a role in healthy ageing. While becoming an internist, dr. Mooijaart noticed that in the clinic there was little attention to the fact that older patients have a very different physiology and should therefore be treated differently. In that period, his interest shifted from discovering how ageing works to discovering how to help the older patients as best as possible. And that is what dr. Mooijaart is working on now. How? Dr. Mooijaart contributes to vitality and ageing as a doctor, researcher and leader as described in this profile.

“What is old? I cannot describe that in terms of age. I have seen people of 62 that are very old and people of 92 about whom I wondered what they were doing in my geriatric consulting room.”

“I am pleased by the fact that the type of research I am doing contributes to the everyday patient care.”

Vitality and Ageing

Dr. Mooijaart describes being vital as not having many limitations and being able to deal with limitations that are present. Moreover, he mentions having realistic expectations and continuing making plans and living life with the present limitations makes someone vital. The contribution of dr. Mooijaart to vitality is to shift the end goal of treatment for older patients. The end goal should not necessarily be life extension and living as long as possible, but rather allowing the older person to continue living vitally, independent and at home.

About ageing, dr. Mooijaart explained that he does not have a certain age limit for labelling someone as old. This is because the older population consists of different patients that vary in age biologically. He explained being old is the combination of having different diseases and limitations.

Leadership

Dr. Mooijaart strives to increase the awareness of doctors and nurses concerning vulnerability or risks of older patients. As leader of a research project, he is interested in the question ‘how can we help our older patients better?’. Through this scientific research, he aims to improve treatment decisions that result in better outcomes for the patients by creating awareness amongst both the care provider and the patient. An example of the fruit this research has born is the development of a screening tool for the vulnerability of older patients at the emergency department that is now used in daily clinical practice.

Dr. Mooijaart does not only perform studies with his team, he also works together with other hospitals. The advantage of this collaboration is a significantly increased patient group that can be included in studies. Besides the increase in patient numbers, there is an increase in different experts who are involved in the research as well. The main advantage remains that ‘by working together, you enlarge the influence of the study’, dr. Mooijaart mentioned.

“Older patients are not a strange sub population of society that should all go to the geriatrician. Every doctor in the hospital deals with older patients.”

“I try to be the chairman that does not continuously watch over someone’s shoulder, but rather gives someone own responsibility. I consciously put others in their own strength.”

Besides being project leader of several studies, dr. Mooijaart fulfils other functions, both in the hospital as well as outside the hospital. Dr. Mooijaart is chair of the taskforce geriatrics at the LUMC. The goal of the taskforce is to prepare the entire hospital for delivering appropriate care to older patients. Outside the hospital, dr. Mooijaart is chair of the core group geriatrics of the Dutch Internist Association. With this group he aims to arrange science, guidelines and education on a nationwide level in such a way that all internists will have relevant knowledge of older patients. As the chairman of the core group, dr. Mooijaart leads board meetings, he determines the strategy and what should be on the agenda. Besides this formal leadership, dr. Mooijaart describes an increased extent of informal leadership in his function as leader. For example, people consult him in times of trouble as he is assumed to have the overview.

Although he is the chairman with the overview, dr. Mooijaart describes himself as a distinct team player. He enjoys accomplishments achieved together with others more than those achieved by himself.

In all, as a doctor, researcher and leader, dr. Mooijaart intends to increase the comprehension of how the ageing process affects a diseased patient and how diseases affect the ageing process. Ideally, this increased comprehension should be realized on large scale. Dr. Mooijaart states: ‘in 10 years we will perform our studies in all hospitals in the Netherlands and we will collect data in a central database’. If you want to achieve something on multiple domains or research areas, you need a variation of experts. ‘The world has become too complex to bundle all knowledge into one person’. And therefore, dr. Mooijaart describes that future leaders will not be the ones that have all the knowledge. Future leaders will be the people who take processes in at a glance and who will put the right people with the right expertise at the right place. ‘That is what the future will look like’. ■

Lessons from a professor in geriatric oncology

Prof. dr. Johanneke Portielje | By Lisa van Tol

Ageing research

As oncologist in the Haga hospital, prof. dr. Portielje experienced that for the many older patients in her practice, treatment outcomes as prescribed in the literature might not apply, and treatment decisions could not be made according to guidelines. Among older individuals large health disparities exist and individual cancer treatment decisions often strongly depended on the background health.

With the oncology and geriatrics team prof. dr. Portielje then implemented of care pathways that stimulated individualised care for the elderly in the oncology department. Besides, she and her colleagues started creating study cohorts of older oncology patients. Gradually, contact with the LUMC and other hospitals about the topic grew. So by the time the LUMC was looking for someone to fulfil her current position, this was only a logical step to take.

In this position her aim is not only to regionally improve care for the elderly, but also to motivate these care improvements with research. By doing so, prof. dr. Portielje said, future doctors will be able to rationally make decisions that she herself had to make on a gut feeling.

“Not only improve care for the elderly, but also motivate these care improvements with research.”



“Future doctors will be able to rationally make decisions we now often make on gut feeling.”

In onco geriatrics, we still have to create awareness; It often seems that we are still in the midst of our wake-up call about the ageing of society, prof. dr. Portielje explains. Although cancer is now cause of death for 31% of people and has clearly become a disease of old age, new treatments are still tested in the young and middle aged. Also, outcomes of studies are not always relevant for older patients. Interestingly, in university hospitals where research is developed and maintained, patient populations tend to be on average ten years younger than in community hospitals, where the majority of patients is treated. Yet, the patient population in the university hospitals ages as well, and interest in elderly patients grows.

Leadership

Prof. dr. Portielje leads the oncology training of six internists every two years. These young professionals often do not start off with a specific interest in geriatrics. This often changes, as soon as they see the challenge of weighing different treatment options for individual elderly patients. Soon they are motivated to better listen to what matters to older individuals, to extensively inspect their overall health, and inform them about endpoints more applicable to their individual situation. Many older patients should not be informed about ten year survival rates, but rather about average life expectancy, quality of life and time in independency.

Training medical professionals, prof. dr. Portielje says it does not feel like leading; It is rather inspiring them.

Vision for the future

According to prof. dr. Portielje, interest in elderly is indispensable for all medical doctors, because the largest burden of disease strikes at old age. She is confident that knowledge about geriatrics will spread fast among medical professionals. However, she continues, also in organisation of care, in politics and finance of health care and research, we need more awareness that while health care will soon be primarily about older people, at present we lack scientific evidence to direct treatment decisions.

Funding of geriatric oncology research should get much higher priority.

“We need people with knowledge of ageing who act to improve healthcare for the true target population.”

This is also what she would like to recommend Vitality and Ageing students; She hopes to find us in all kinds of working fields in some years, having one thing in common: sharing our expertise and spreading the knowledge and interest in the ageing population. We need people with knowledge of ageing who act to improve healthcare for the true target population. ■

“More than leading I would rather inspire.”

A doctor diving into the field of leadership

Prof. dr. Ton Rabelink | By Janne van Erp

A power blackout. In all serenity, prof. dr. Rabelink said: 'I think this is an emergency situation'. He finished answering my first question and left, to act as a leader. Leaving me behind with only a first impression and some assumptions. In the second interview, I discovered the facts behind this leader.

"Sharing core values within a team is like a sailing boat, when it catches all the wind, it gives you an energy boost."

As a young boy fascinated by doing research, prof. dr. Rabelink followed his passion which translated into becoming a doctor. With the drive for research, he did a PhD about kidney diseases before becoming an internist-nephrologist. Then, he combined being a doctor with being a researcher. Moreover, he ended up in a leading position. The combination of these three roles has not always been easy. 'Being a leader requires another devotion, it is more complex to combine this with doing research and being a doctor', prof. dr. Rabelink said. How he manages to combine these roles and how he views vitality and ageing will be revealed in this profile of a leader, of prof. dr. Rabelink.

Vitality and Ageing

Prof. dr. Rabelink defines ageing as 'an enormous challenge for society'. More specifically, as noticed in the LUMC as well, especially with the flu epidemic present at this moment. According to prof. dr. Rabelink, we do not

“We should think forward and try to be creative to come up with solutions within the area of an increasing older population.”

have an appropriate system for all older people, in particular the vulnerable elderly. For example, the people who benefit from dialysis receive treatment. However, the people who do not benefit from dialysis and have different needs also have the right to other forms of care and optimal treatment, which increases quality of life. Therefore, prof. dr. Rabelink is proud of the developments in the discussion about meaningful care for the elderly in hospitals. Geriatrics is no longer an isolated part of hospital care, older patients have become more integrated in the system and in the whole hospital it is better known how to deal with the increase in older patients.

From prof. dr. Rabelink’s point of view, vitality comprises more than health. He explained: staying vital while becoming older depends on two important aspects, including doing your hobbies and having a club of people around you. At this moment we are experiencing that ‘70 is the new 60’, we are more vital than we were in the past. But, according to prof. dr. Rabelink, that tragedy of frailty and social isolation is an important dimension and we as society should find an answer for this.

Leadership

Prof. dr. Rabelink is the chairman of a division that includes multiple departments of the hospital, such as internal medicine, cardiology, and radiology. He is responsible for the quality of care and the budgets in this division. Moreover, prof. dr. Rabelink is head of the department internal medicine, including geriatrics. But how does prof. dr. Rabelink manage being a leader? Prof. dr. Rabelink said: within the hospital, which is a professional organisation, a leader should not come up with things others should do. He described: ‘I cannot tell a cardiologist how to treat heart infarction, that is not how it works. I have to empower the professionals in what they do. What I have to do is to provide the framework in which they can do their job. I have a supportive and stimulatory role within that framework’.

According to prof. dr. Rabelink, it is of vital importance that he is a doctor as well. It makes him more credible towards the professionals he leads, since he shares the sentiment and experiences of the professionals working in the LUMC.

“When you play chess on multiple chessboards, you can achieve more influence.”

“You feel the cooperation, you see the results.”

Being a leader, being a doctor and being a researcher has not always been easy. ‘Being a professional and a leader results in a complicated split, it means you have to do a bit of everything, so you cannot do one thing perfectly’, prof. dr. Rabelink explained. However, the organisation of patient care is an extension of being a doctor and therefore, it is interesting to combine for prof. dr. Rabelink.

According to prof. dr. Rabelink, characteristics that make you a good doctor match the characteristics of a good leader. He mentioned three core values: empathy, passion and respect. In some situations, these values and decision making are incompatible. However, sometimes it is necessary to make important decisions for the sake of the organisation. This is something prof. dr. Rabelink had to learn, as ‘it does not match the phenotype of a doctor’. Fortunately, prof. dr. Rabelink does not often have to make difficult decisions. The professionals he works with are highly motivated, so leading mostly feels like an automatic process.

Besides some challenges, prof. dr. Rabelink explained how leadership provides him with a lot of energy. ‘Seeing people in your team working together and supporting each other results in better performance than working alone’.

Prof. dr. Rabelink’s career is already extensive, but does he still have ambitions as a leader, or in his general career? For prof. dr. Rabelink, the remaining challenges are mainly in the field of elderly care. But, as he said, we are all needed in this challenge relevant for the whole society. It is much more complex and it transcends the organisation within a hospital. Prof. dr. Rabelink believes this is the ultimate goal of a leader, but not for himself. However, he does not stand still. His ambition is to achieve a leadership position outside the hospital system, in the field of research he is doing about stem cell biology. ‘The ultimate answer to ageing’, according to prof. dr. Rabelink.

And this, doing research, was the fascination prof. dr. Rabelink set as a goal. During his career, he dived into the unexplored field of leadership. Based on the values he adheres to as a doctor, he successfully fulfils his job as leader. Thus, stay open-minded, stay aware of the opportunities and most of all stay yourself and adhere to your core values. Because with a lot of energy, you can sail every ocean. ■

The continuous rat race of ageing research

Prof. dr. Eline Slagboom | By Eline van Geffen

During university she was more involved in making cabaret and singing jazz, however, Eline Slagboom has become one of the prominent leaders of the ageing research.

It was not a part of the plan during high school and university for Eline Slagboom to become a leader in the field of ageing research. During these years, she was more focused on singing in a jazz band, making cabaret, and becoming a teacher. While studying biology, she became fascinated by molecular biology and human research. During her thesis, focused on research in rats, she got involved in human ageing research. She read an article on telomere shortening, and wondered what this would be like in twins. Always wanting to know about mechanisms and having innovative thoughts have brought her to where she is: the leader of the molecular epidemiology group of the LUMC and a professorship in this field.

“You cannot be a leader that differs too much from who you really are.”



Leadership

The section of molecular epidemiology in the LUMC consists of approximately 35 people divided over three branches: epigenetic, longevity and osteoarthritis research. In terms of research, Slagboom is the head of the longevity group. Moreover, she is the leader of the whole section. Therefore, she is always busy finding connections between the different branches, connecting people, and making sure that everyone gets highly profiled. According to Slagboom, a challenge leaders can come across is having too many ambitious people in the group, which limits the ability to do justice for everyone. 'However', she says, 'too little ambitious people is worse'.

'You cannot be a leader that differs too much from who you really are', is what Slagboom said when asked on her views on authority. According to her, it is important to keep your own train of thought in mind when listening to others. However, it is only necessary to push your own ideas through when the situation gets chaotic. 'There are two types of people, people who think in concepts and those who think in detail', she said. When thinking in concepts, those concepts are built together, Slagboom explains. According to Slagboom, thinking too much in detail will lead to holding on to your own thoughts too much.

According to Slagboom, the world of today is difficult for the research field. Once you become a professor, your social environment assumes you have made it, she explains. However, the academic environment is one of continuous pressure to achieve. The research field has become like a rat race, in which there are many competitors. To keep the atmosphere in the group of Slagboom inspirational, she tries to create an ambiance in which sharing is key. Although Slagboom is extremely busy, she keeps involved with her staff. 'What I do is of vital importance to what happens in the group', she says, 'thinking along, having my own vision, and creating ambiance contribute to the group atmosphere', Slagboom elaborates.

As a leader, it is important to think ahead, Slagboom explains 'leadership is like motherhood, a continuous commitment'. She elaborates that it is necessary to always think about the future, because it is important to think about the people in the group and their jobs. Sufficient grants need to be

"There are two types of people, people who think in concepts and those who think in detail."

"Leadership is like motherhood, a continuous commitment."

"I would find it amazing if I would find the gene in the longevity families I've been studying the last 20 years."

obtained to pay for the research, therefore, leadership is also entrepreneurship. The research field and applying for grants comes with a lot of pressure. Slagboom deals with this burden by working hard and being able to be work-focused. Although she sometimes thinks that there will be a quieter period ahead, this has not happened yet.

Ageing

Slagboom is a leader in the field of longevity research. For her, an eye-opener was to discover that people are born in families which have outlived their birth cohort for centuries, despite exposures like the Spanish flu, wars, or infections. Therefore, she believes that there are physiological buttons, both environmental and genetic, determining the rate of ageing. Those buttons have already been discovered in animal models, however Slagboom would find it would be amazing if this could be applied to humans. Her career would be complete if she could find a gene in humans, (co-)responsible for the speed of the ageing process. This would go hand in hand with finding a solution for those who age more rapidly. Therefore, the biggest challenge of the ageing society for Slagboom is enabling to keep people in their intrinsic capacity for as long as possible. The development of novel biomarkers, finding genes responsible and developing therapies would be her dream coming true.

Bright warm lights suddenly started to enter Slagboom's office, and I noticed the sun was setting. The time had flown by and we had been talking about leadership and ageing for over an hour. The interview truly inspired me, and shed a different light on leaders and the prejudice I had of arrogant, self-inclined people. As a concluding question I asked Slagboom whether she would want to know, if she had a gene that would give her a chance of a reduced lifespan. Her answer was: 'only if there is a therapy'. ■

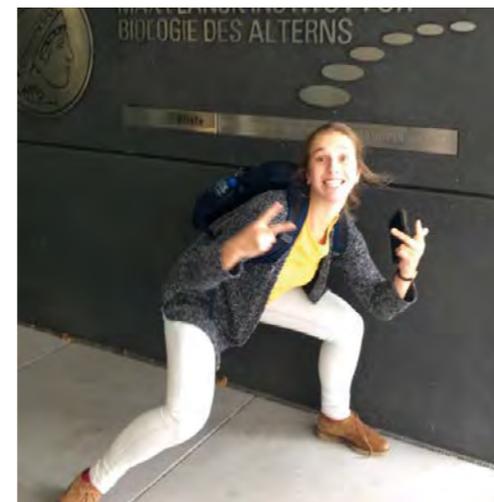
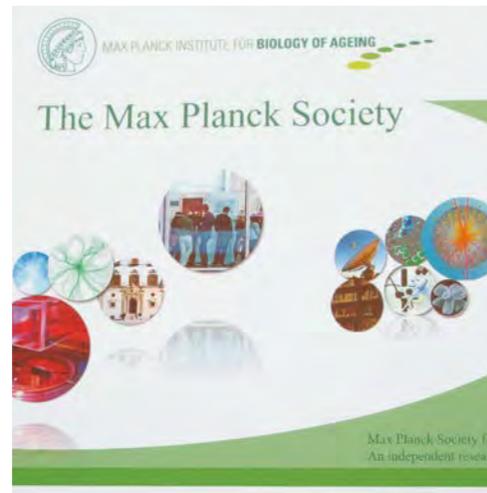
The study trip to Cologne

The Max Planck Institute for Biology of Ageing

By Babak Nakhjavan Shahraki (aka Bob)

I have to say that it was an amazing trip to the Max Planck institute. During the bus ride the views of the surrounding nature and civic scenes were amazing. Feeling the soul of a unified Europe was astonishing. The Max Planck institute is very modern and advanced. It gave me the impression of entering into the next century. I could see scientists working with very sophisticated technology and machinery. These observations in every corner of the facility made me more curious about basic and advanced life sciences. The strong will of the researchers is stunning. In fact, sometimes they work for fifteen hours a day. We had the opportunity to see the drosophila fruit flies and C-Elegance roundworms ourselves, and gave presentations about our projects to the staff of the Max Planck. Some of the Max Planck's PhD students were amazed by the suggestions that the students made.

The journey was not only scientific but also full of fun. Students, teachers, and Max Planck PhD students all had supper together. It was a very nice and friendly night. There was a great and beautiful church in Cologne. Its beauty was mind blowing especially with the night lights. ■



Lessons from the Dutch Debate Institute

By Bregje Korpershoek

During this master, in almost every course, we were 'terrorized' by debates. At least, this is what I thought when I looked at our schedule at the beginning of this year. Just like most of the master students, I was not a particular fan of debating. But after a year full of training, practising and several debates 'for real', I can say that I actually enjoy debating and have learnt a lot from all these lessons.

As a part of the educational line Academic Development, the Dutch Debate Institute visited the LUMC each month to familiarise us with the practice of debating. The alteration of theory and practice was liked by all students, but soon the happy faces changed into slightly nervous students as they had to debate and improvise. Using 'SEXI' and other instructions, everyone was driven to convince the judges of their point of view. The slightly nervous faces soon disappeared and a fierce debate emerged. During this year, all the nervous faces disappeared and at the last debate, I only saw confident, shining students! ■



Orientation visit to the Health Council in The Hague

By Leon Martens

As for possibly my favorite visit, we were able to go to the health council situated in The Hague. We were given a brief presentation in a beautiful conference room. Once we were told what exactly the health council entails, which I didn't really know until then, we were given a few cases. This is where it got the most interesting I think. Together with a partner we had to pretend to be working for the health council and had to figure out everything that could play a role in whatever subject we had to give advice about. It was really cool to see what everyone could come up with, especially things you didn't think of yourself, and even then, some parties weren't mentioned. Also interesting was to find out there are multiple councils, depending on the subject and that being on a council is actually not a fulltime job but volunteer work. I left this place truly feeling like I gained more insight in the process that is behind giving advice to the ministry of health and now everytime I see a news item stating the health council has released a report giving advice, I understand the work that went into it. ■





Behind the scenes: The healthcare professionals

Janne van Erp

During the course 'The Older Individual' we had the opportunity to have a look in the practical world of ageing. We were able to visit a general practitioner, a specialist geriatric medicine, a district nurse, a nursing home physician or a welfare organisation. During the visits we had a look behind the scenes and were involved in a certain specialism for half a day. It was interesting to hear the experiences of the specialists and their perspectives on ageing. Additionally, the contact with the elderly, at home or in a clinical setting, brought new perspectives as well. Working

with older people requires a lot of patience and other ways of caring. Questions about quality of life and what matters to the patient become priority. Does a patient really want to be treated? Is a treatment of added value to someone's well-being, or does it reduce someone's well-being?

You can learn a lot about an ageing population in lectures, but being in the field for one and a half day provides you with an extra amount of experience and knowledge of added value to the theory. ■

iZi housing Orientation visit

By Laurie Warmerdam

During the course 'The Older Individual', the students and some of the Master crew visited the iZi experience house in The Hague. This orientation visit took place on the 9th of January. The iZi housing was located in a senior apartment on the top floor. We were welcomed by an elderly welcoming committee. The set-up of this house was done to introduce technology to elderly people which help them live independently at home for as long as possible. The main products that were shown, are used for safety and comfort. The requirement for all products is that they are affordable and tailored to people's needs. A lot of technology is already on the market, of which the existence is unknown for most people. Moreover, a lot of elderly people are very used to using electronic devices and new technology. The elderly of the welcoming committee are also testing one or more products at home and give feedback on it. This way, a selection is made from all the products with the ones that are most useful and understandable for them. The LUMC studies the effects of usage of these technological solutions. This project continues for 3 years (until the end of 2018) and then a plan for further implementation will be presented. ■



Bente Koeijer (24)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

I did a bachelor in Health Science, which I enjoyed, but I missed the human aspect. I did not merely want to talk numbers and costs, I wanted to talk people and needs. I was also interested in the ageing process and people's perspectives on growing old, as the proportion of older adults is increasing globally.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

I would like to pass on an advice that I received from an older adult who I interviewed for the module The Older Individual. She stressed the importance of keeping the mind occupied with small, lovely things. So, go outside and keep your ears and eyes open. You might notice an odd bird, overhear a funny conversation or smell the perfume of a stranger passing by. The fresh air will do you good, too. I believe that living in the moment, and being appreciative, are key to a healthy mind when growing older. And never stop reading.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

The high tea on our last day immediately came to mind when I read this question. I had lots of fun dancing and chatting with the guests, but I was feeling sad for my leaving class mates at the same time. It was an afternoon packed with emotions, which made it so memorable.

My ambition for the future is:

To contribute to a society that is inclusive and respectful for people of all ages. I know my class mates will laugh when they read this, but I really do want to do something about ageism.

My classmates and me: when I think of Sila, I think of...

...an incredibly fun and kind-hearted classmate who I am happy to call my friend now. During class discussions, Sila always contributed her empathetic and people-focused opinions. She also made a great video on her innovation for TOI, including teachers and class mates.

"To contribute to a society that is inclusive and respectful for people of all ages."



Babak Nakhjavan Shahraki (42)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

To become more experienced about the views and problems of the elderly. In approaching the Elderly now understand them very deeply. This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully: Eat healthy, do regular exercise, and feel the life as you are going to live 200 years old, age is just a number!! Love everything about yourself and the rest of the world!!

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

I have to say that it was an amazing trip to Max Planck institute. During the bus ride to there the views of nature and also civic scenes were amazing. Feeling the soul of a unified Europe was astonishing. Max Planck institute is very modern and advanced. It gave me the impression of entering into next century. I could see scientists working with very sophisticated technology and machinery. These observations in every corner of the facility made me more curious about basic and advanced life sciences. The strong will of the researchers is stunning. In fact, sometimes they work for fifteen hours a day. We were assigned to some projects, they were mind-opening then, the presentations that the students made were astonishing. Especially that the PhD students who were

"I hope as a physician I could do more for the elderly patients, both in research area and also in the clinical field."



involved in these projects were amazed by the suggestions that the students made. However the journey was not only scientific but Also full of fun. Students, teachers, and Max Planck PhD students we all had supper together. It was a very nice and friendly night. There was a great and beautiful church in Cologne. Its beauty was mind blowing especially with the high lights.

My ambition for the future is:

I hope as a physician I could do more for the elderly patients, both in research area and also in the clinical field.

My classmates and me: when I think of Turki, I think of...

...I would love to write about Turki. He is modest, polite and very organized person. As I talk to him he always listens to me very carefully and he tries his best for helping other classmates including me. He is a trustworthy person. I am very happy to have Turki as a friend.

Berivan Yildiz (24)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

I have a background in Health Sciences and I became interested in ageing during my studies. Therefore I wanted to broaden my knowledge about ageing and all aspects involved.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

When you age you will most likely experience decline and loss in many kind of forms. My advice is to accept this and enjoy the things you still can do. In order to age successfully, you should find your own way to positively deal with challenges and become a resilient happy old lady/man. And always SMILE!! ☺

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

Next to meeting many nice friends and teachers, the best memory I have is going abroad for my internship! (and I will never forget that I fell from the chair in Hepatho after the first exam)

“To contribute something to the health and well being of (vulnerable) elderly people.”



My ambition for the future is:

To contribute something to the health and well being of (vulnerable) elderly people.

My classmates and me: when I think of Bente, I think of...

...her brilliant feminist character, and ofcourse dipping Kinderbuono in her coffee during the lecture breaks.

Bregje Korpershoek (22)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

After finishing my Bachelor in Medicine, I did not want to go straight into my medical internships. I am interested in becoming a general practitioner in the future and since our population is ageing, this master seemed a very useful way to spend my year 'off' during my medical studies.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

I think that the most important thing, is to keep doing what you love most. This is important in order to age vitally.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

No doubt: the 'food moments' during this year! The cosy lunch moments we had with members from the Elderly Board, the extensive dinner we had in Koln and the delicious dinner at Porto Pino at the end of this study year. Furthermore, the dinners with all the master students after each exam were unforgettable.

My ambition for the future is:

To become the best general practitioner if possible, however Daan is my competitor. I want to become a general practitioner that takes all aspects, wishes and needs of older people into account in order to optimize their care.

“I want to become a general practitioner that takes all aspects, wishes and needs of older people into account in order to optimize their care.”

My classmates and me: when I think of Elise, I think of...

My roomie! Elise and I have known each other since the start of our medical studies and even live together in one house. I saw Elies more often at home preparing delicious dinner meals for our roommates than in our lecture room, but we were both guilty of this. So when I think of Elise, I think of the girl I know for almost four years: she is the sweetest, funniest and best-cooking Belgian girl I know!



Daan Kooijman (22)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

As a future doctor (fingers crossed), I wanted to expand my knowledge regarding the ageing population, seeing as they will constitute a sizeable share of my future patient population. So knowing more about this population will in turn allow me to become a better doctor and provide the best possible care.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

Move to Japan. I think they're onto something over yonder. But in case that doesn't work out, you could always try surrounding yourself by loved ones, focussing on possibilities instead of limitations that come with old age and finding purpose in life. Also, don't do drugs, kids.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

I know for sure that the terrific trip to Cologne (the city, not the type of fragrance) is one for the books. The yearbooks to be precise. The trips there and back again were already filled with merriment. Combined with an educationally sound visit to the Max Planck centre and a fun evening out, it's a recipe for a wonderful experience.

My ambition for the future is:

To become the very best like no one ever was. Barring that, I'd love to get my medical degree and eventually become a general practitioner. Then, I want to focus on obtaining happiness in the form of cats and chocolate.

My classmates and me: when I think of Bregje, I think of...

...Many a meeting of the year representation and other various committees. Ever enthusiastic, cooperative and creative, it's been a joy representing alongside Bregje. Present at every group event, Bregje's a tried-and-true socialite that's always fun to be around. So if she's present, you know you're in for a good time.

"To become the very best like no one ever was. Barring that, I'd love to get my medical degree and eventually become a general practitioner."



Eline van Geffen (21)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

I was attracted to the masters because it seemed to touch upon different subjects compared to my bachelor. I wanted to know more about the biology and system of the human body, and ageing is a very interesting perspective to achieve this.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

Eat enough, exercise enough and enjoy enough.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

I loved all the people, and how we were such a small and diverse group. Therefore, my best memory is us getting to know each other at a level other master students will never know. My second best memory were all the free kroketten during the JVT meetings.

"I want to age healthy and grow old happy."



My ambition for the future is:

I am looking forward to travelling in South America this summer, and starting my medical internships in November. For the long shot, I want to age healthy and grow old happy.

My classmates and me: when I think of Daan...

...I think of Shakespeare and Game of Thrones. I think of the two minute presentation at the start of the year, and how you just blew us all, including Bronwyn away. I have enjoyed all the literature references you made throughout the year and your dry humour a lot. Thanks for your great year Daan!

Elise Verbeek (22)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

The main reason I chose the master Vitality & Ageing was to broaden my horizon. Furthermore, the master addresses different qualities, making it extremely diverse. Due to our ever-growing aging society, the elderly are a hot topic. However, there are still a lot of unanswered questions regarding the problems older individuals have to deal with. By combining our knowledge on a biological, individual and societal level, it will hopefully bring us a step closer towards healthy ageing.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

Stay active and keep trying to do the things you love.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

The trip to Cologne is my best memory as the beginning of a new exciting year. A place where solid friendships were developed. A companionship for life.

“By combining our knowledge on a biological, individual and societal level, it will hopefully bring us a step closer towards healthy ageing.”

My ambition for the future is:

To become a surgeon.

My classmates and me:

when I think of Warsha, I think of...

...Little Miss Sunshine. Always laughing. Always happy. Positive vibes.



Janne van Erp (23)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

Knowing it could be possible to be of importance in the ageing population motivated me to look for masters in this field. Since I am broadly interested in the field of vitality and ageing, this master's fits perfectly and provides insight in several perspectives of vitality and ageing.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

Add life to your years, not years to your life! Age is just a number. Live according to your possibilities and keep setting goals. These could be small or big, it does not matter as long as you keep enjoying the things you do surrounded by nice people.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

The good time we had together after exams, with the karaoke night, between lectures. And of course the high tea with the elderly in which it all came together: music, food, the elderly and all classmates, this afternoon was a successful closing of the year!

My ambition for the future is:

To age successfully with all the gained knowledge and experiences during last year. And I want to apply that knowledge in a job in which I will work with and for the older population.



My classmates and me:

when I think of Eline, I think of...

...a curious person asking the right and critical questions. Eline is very honest and besides critical questions, she can make critical comments. Her honesty, enthusiasm and open attitude make her an enjoyable person to be with. She always seems very relaxed and loves to talk about her cat, Bart and the mice she works with in the lab. Eline loves food (a few examples: oreo cookies, kroketten, sweets, ...), but she needs that energy for all the work she does! Keep up all that energy Eline, I am sure you will face a bright future as medical doctor with Bart, a cat and happiness!

“Knowing it could be possible to be of importance in the ageing population motivated me to look for masters in this field.”

Judith Veldhorst (23)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

After my medical bachelor I wanted to broaden my horizon and the master Vitality and Ageing was perfect for this. In this master I learned more about a variety of topics ranging from the ageing of cells to the organisation of health care in the Netherlands and other countries.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

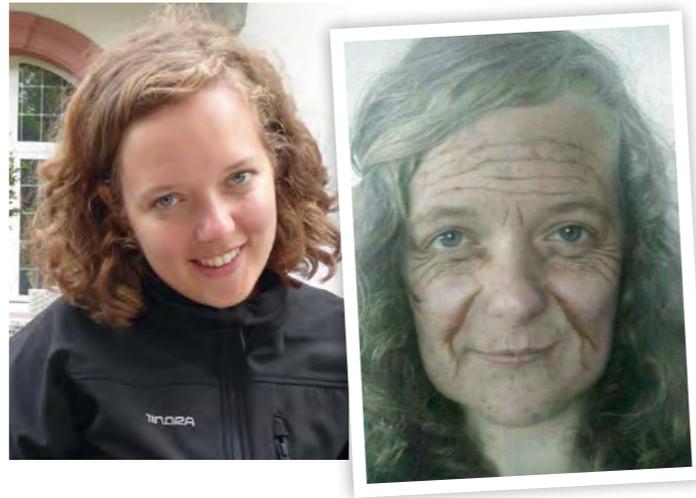
I will teach them in order to age successfully you should eat healthy and stay active. However, what may be even more important is accepting any limitations that you may encounter and then focus on the things you can do.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

I don't have a specific moment that I remember as the best memory, but when I look back I mainly have memories about the time together as a group. It was always fun to be together and to go to lectures or work together on the assignments. My classmates definitely made this year memorable.

My ambition for the future is:

In the future I want to be general practitioner and I hope that I will be able to use my knowledge from this year in my work.



“I will teach them in order to age successfully you should eat healthy and stay active.”

My classmates and me: when I think of Laura, I think of...

...a very sweet girl. Laura is someone who is always happy and you can always laugh with. However, she could also annoy the group in the winter when all the windows had to be open! I also think of her beginning a presentation which would always start with her putting her two hands together and then starting to talk. And of course she would always make sure that we would relax in the break by sharing her greatest hobby with us: watching episodes of dating programs like 'first dates'.

Laura Gorter (22)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

Last year, I decided I did not want to start my medical internships immediately after my bachelor. Then I heard it was possible to study another masters before my internships. I found this master and became enthusiastic as this study had a very diverse program and it was a study at another university than my bachelor of medicine. Therefore, this study would be a totally different and exciting experience.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

Have fun, work out regularly, make friends and drink a glass of wine now and then.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

I really had so much fun this year that I cannot name one best memory. When I think back of this year, I think of how amazing it was. Especially, I liked all the field trips such as the aging experience, Cologne, building the escape room and the closing event.

My ambition for the future is:

In ten years, I hope to have finished my medical internships, and become a MD. At this moment, I hope to become a specialist for internal diseases or a GP. I hope to have bought a house in a small village. In addition, I hope to still see you all, for example at the reunion in ten years.

My classmates and me: when I think of Manon, I think of...

The one time during the debates, you sang your closing line. I really think that was amazing. It showed how much courage you had and what kind of power woman you are. You know what you want, you are ambitious and you are kind, with those characteristics I am sure you will have a bright future!

“Have fun, work out regularly, make friends and drink a glass of wine now and then.”



Laurie Warmerdam (22)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

I want to learn how people age healthy, like in the Blue Zones. I want to learn how the health care system can be adjusted to the needs and preferences of the growing elderly population. Moreover, health promotion and vitality of the population are the key to an ageing society. Preventive medicine is a very important way to improve health and may contribute to keeping a good health for longer years. I want to become a general practitioner, and this is one of the components of this job.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

Be active, eat your veggies (you will start to like them eventually) and be nice. Being angry and stressed out will not help you to reach your goals. Keep an open mind and do the things you like. Ask yourself when you wake up in the morning, if you are excited for the things you will do that day. If not, you are doing something wrong.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

The small group of students which gets stronger and stronger over the year. The openness and trust there was during workgroups or feedback sessions. The individual support and warmth by the master staff during mentor talks, internship talks and personal development assignments.

“Be active, eat your veggies (you will start to like them eventually) and be nice.”

My ambition for the future is:

Become a fabulous GP with some rowing on the side.

My classmates and me: when I think of Bob, I think of...

...a fully equipped doctor from Iran with a heart of gold, who wanted to learn some Dutch words. He decided to go to college again and made a lot of new friends during the master V&A. Bob always wears a high-tech headset for incoming calls during the day and had the best excuse to skip class to pick up his son at school. Bob is one of the most considerate and complimenting person I've ever met. Bob, you are a champ yourself. Be like Bob.



Leon Martens (23)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

As our society continues to grow older and older I think the importance of studying the elderly grows as well. This combined with the fact that up until recently the elderly were often excluded from research made me want to follow this path and hopefully change that in the future.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

Don't smoke. Take care of your body from a young age already. But most importantly don't stress too much over things in life and don't be afraid to take a leap. I really do feel like this is what ends up shortening lifespan. Maybe not in the conventional way but it certainly shortens the amount of actual living you do in your time on this planet.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

Actually attending... (Haha!) No I'm kidding, I have been so surprised at how fast our group grew so fond of each other. I am sure I made some friends for life here on this master. But if I were to choose one specific memory it would probably be Cologne. Everything from the bus rides to the hungover presentations was just amazing. I feel like I got to know most of the students a lot better during this trip.



My ambition for the future is:

Live a happy life! Too cheesy? Well I would love to be able to work somewhere in research. So, a PhD might be happening in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, I hope to end up in science studying things yet unknown.

My classmates and me: when I think of Judith, I think of...

...someone with a kind and warm personality. Judith is someone who likes to take the effort to really get to know you. She likes to joke around but also knows how far she can go. And above all she was kind enough to knit me a scarf! I've always wanted a woollen scarf.

“Live a happy life! Too cheesy? Well I would love to be able to work somewhere in research.”

Manon Kuipers (23)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

I have been working in an elderly home for few years now, and still enjoy that very much. I think it is a very grateful field to work in. For example there is a man of 100 years old where I work, and he never leaves the restaurant without thanking us for the nice meal. That brings a smile onto my face every time. Therefore, this masters seemed to fit well for me.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

Make sure you surround yourself with loved ones that have a positive influence on you and that challenge you to get the best out of life. Be happy with all that you can do, and look for alternatives if there is something in life that doesn't go that easy all at once. In the end you have to make sure that you live your life to the fullest!

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

Because of the small size of our group you really develop a connection with each of the students which was very nice. One of my best memories was the karaoke night in Leiden, which was a lot of fun! Also the trip to Cologne was very nice!

My ambition for the future is:

To help (older) people to get the best out of life by making difficult things easier and more understandable. For now I stick to my ambition for implementation.



“To help (older) people to get the best out of life by making difficult things easier and more understandable.”

My classmates and me: when I think of Laurie, I think of...

...A kind girl with a very big heart. She is always looking out for others and shows real interest in her classmates. Her ability to show her feeling makes her a very strong woman in my opinion. Laurie is someone who knows what she wants and will work very hard to achieve that. Once she put her mind to something you can have faith that she will fix it. All in all she is a good team player and a very nice classmate. Thankyou for our year together Laurie and I wish you all the best for your further medicine career and lots of love and happiness in life!!

Silayan Bertomeu (21)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

My interests have always laid in health and understanding how individuals and societies function. Being aware that populations are greying all over the world, having a passion for qualitative research, and feeling that there is still so much that is unknown about old age and the experience of growing old, I was simply drawn to the Masters.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

As one of my interviewees advised me “Hakuna matata. Go to every party, dance a lot, and take care of your teeth! Eat as much ice cream as you can”. I'm not sure about the last part... but definitely do, learn, and experience as much as you can. Travel, understand, and remember that “growing old” still entails growing. Be grateful for everything you have and every stage of life you're in.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

Although I enjoyed the entirety of the Masters, the best experience I have has come from doing my internship and thesis in Cuba. I was confronted with very different ageing and life experiences that have shaped me in both professional and personal ways.

My ambition for the future is:

To tell (elderly) people's stories. Often times, older individuals want to contribute their knowledge and their experiences, but nobody listens to them. I hope my narratives do justice to their valuable life stories and society learns to appreciate their elders.

My classmates and me: when I think of Janne, I think of...

...The start of the program and the positive energy we had from the very first day. I will also always remember her singing about Brabant... despite me not understanding anything, it made me really emotional. Much love Jolly Janne!

“Definitely do, learn, and experience as much as you can.”



Turki Addahash (36)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

To provide a better healthcare to our aging society.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

Do everything in moderation and be happy.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

Getting closer to the elderly people and understanding their perspective of how to age vitally.

My ambition for the future is:

To make a positive change in the healthcare provision that will make the elderly age more vitally and independently.

My classmates and me: when I think of Berivan, I think of...

...When I think about Berivan, I think about how a good listener should be!

“I’m a man of small words.”



“Do everything in moderation and be happy.”

Warsha Jagroep (25)

My motivation to study Vitality and Ageing:

I started the master Vitality and Ageing to broaden my horizon about the ageing process from the cellular level up to the societal level.

This advice is what I will give my grandchildren on how to age successfully:

I would advise my grandchildren that you cannot start too soon with healthy and vital ageing. Finding a balance between good health, social relations and positivity will help you to age happily.

The best memory I have of my time attending this master is:

My best memory of the master are the nice people who I have met and the great new friends who I have made.

“I would advise my grandchildren that you cannot start too soon with healthy and vital ageing.”



My ambition for the future is:

My ambition for the future is to contribute to an environment in which we all can age safe, healthy and happy.

My classmates and me: when I think of Leon, I think of...

When I think of Leon, I think of a loss when he was not present during the interesting lectures and of course making jokes around with each other!



GOODBYE AND GOOD LUCK!

*Dear students,
It's a wrap, your hard work has paid off!*

Sandra van de Venne

*"Good luck for the future
and all the best!"*

Dr. Carla Bakker

*"It has been a privilege to get
to know you! I wish you all the best and
hope you find an ideal and challenging
role in the field of elderly care."*

Prof. dr. Jacobijn Gussekloo

*"I wish you all the
best for your colourful
careers in our ageing
society!"*



Amber Schoenmakers

*"Thank you for all the times that I could make
pictures during the year. I had a great time working
together with you, and I'm proud to welcome you
as fellow alumni! See you at the reunion!"*

Dr. Yvonne Drewes

*"You were a very
constructive group!
I wish you all the best
to contribute to our
ageing society in the
same positive way!"*



GOODBYE AND GOOD LUCK!