



Interdem Academy Fellowships 2016-2017

Final report on research exchange – Joni Gilissen

I am Joni Gilissen, a Doctoral Researcher working at the *End-of-Life Care Research group (Vrije University Brussels & Ghent University)* in Belgium. I am currently working on a project considering “The development and evaluation of an advance care planning (ACP) programme in nursing homes”, which includes the design and planning of a cluster randomised controlled trial and an in-depth process evaluation.

In April 2017, I was awarded one of the INTERDEM Academy Research Fellowships. This fellowship has given me the opportunity to work at *Radboud University Medical Centre* in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, with Dr Yvonne Engels (*Dept of Anaesthesiology, Pain and Palliative Medicine*) and Prof Dr Myrra Vernooij-Dassen (*Nijmegen Centre for Evidence Based Practice & IQ Healthcare*) for three months. Both researchers have a lot of expertise in developing and evaluating complex interventions in palliative and dementia care, and in implementation science. During my stay, I had the opportunity to work with them and their PhD students Bram Tilburgs, who is currently analysing final results of a trial that evaluated the effects of ACP in primary care, Anne Wichmann who is currently busy with the cost-effectiveness analysis of the PACE (EU FP7) data (end-of-life care in nursing homes) and Sinta Kristanti from whom I gained important insights on how to embark on a good recruitment of eligible participants for your research. I have been working on a joint publication, followed two workshops, I had several interesting meetings with experts in the field, I was invited to present my work during a symposium at the *Utrecht University Medical Centre* and I had the opportunity to work in the highly efficient *IQ Healthcare Department* which really invests in their junior researchers by enhancing a continuous learning process through 360° feedback, reflective sessions with a professional moderator, journal clubs and Junior Meetings.

Work hard, play hard. During my stay, I additionally found out that besides work, these colleagues and I have another shared interest: cycling. That stereotype we Belgians often refer to, that *The Dutch* have fast, direct, comfortable and safe cycling routes over longer distances, is in fact true! In addition, Nijmegen is surrounded by beautiful nature and has a few noteworthy sights, which gave me the opportunity to do some interesting sightseeing trips during the weekends.

I am really grateful to Yvonne, Myrra and the INTERDEM Academy for facilitating this visit. I would strongly recommend it to future would-be applicants. My experience at Radboudumc was invaluable - both to me as a researcher, and to my research. Finally, I want to thank my supervisors Dr Lara Pivodic and Prof Dr Lieve Van den Block for encouraging and challenging me in equal measure and for helping me in establishing international contacts that I need to carry out meaningful research.