INTRODUCTION

2021 will also go into the books as a corona year. A year with two faces for the Aletta Jacobs School of Public Health. The uncertainty about long-term work and living with corona has left no one untouched. The physical contact between researchers, teachers and professionals in the AJSPH community was sorely missed, despite a few weeks without a lockdown. At the same time, this annual overview proves that despite this lack, a great deal has turned out to be possible. It shows that we as School of Public Health have made a substantial and relevant contribution to the academic and social corona debate. And it shows that we are resilient enough to make an impact in other ways along the five pillars of the AJSPH, namely Research, Education, Innovation, Public Engagement and Internationalization.

The selection of the 2021 annual overview was therefore still quite a task. That makes us both proud and grateful. Both radiate to the AJSPH network. Because the success of the AJSPH is a direct result of everyone’s involvement, creativity and enthusiasm. We sincerely hope to continue to experience that energy in the new year as we move closer to our mission of more healthy years.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of the Aletta team,

Frederic van Kleef
Jochen Mierau
RESEARCH

More healthy years for everyone. This is the ultimate goal of the Aletta Jacobs School of Public Health. Through meetups, matchmaking, and seminars, Aletta facilitates interdisciplinary connections between researchers and collaborations with regional, national, and international partners in society.

ALETTA HEALTH GRANT

Through consultancy earnings, AJSPH has reserved a budget to stimulate small and short term activities within the UMCG, UG and the Hanze UAS that are linked to the Public Health theme. Through the Aletta Health Grant, seven projects were funded, ranging from a workshop on gender differences in common somatic symptoms and a visualization of the discussion, to a booklet about speech difficulties in Parkinson patients. The Aletta Health Grant will also be available in 2022, so young researchers who need seed funding for interdisciplinary Public Health projects are welcome to apply!
**ALETTA FELLOWS**

In 2021, we added 81 new fellows to the existing group of 110 Aletta Fellows! We are happy to expand this community and will organize activities to get to know each other in the coming year. The Aletta Fellows are now on the [website](#) with a profile related to their research topics, in order to make it easier for the network to find certain expertise. Thanks to all fellows who’ve provided their bio and photo, and a friendly reminder to those who haven’t yet to provide us with their information.

**SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY: ALETTA’S TALENT NETWORK BLOG SERIES & GLOBAL HEALTH LAUNCH**

Aletta’s Talent Network (ATN), our community of junior researchers in Public Health, started a blog series in which ATN members write about their research. The series gives a nice insight into Public Health research done by researchers from many different disciplines. You can find the blogs [here](#).

On 2nd of November, we organized the Aletta Global Health Launch, which kicked off with a panel discussion in the Martini Church and followed up with a workshop at the Aletta headquarters. Many researchers from different disciplines attended, and plans were made for building this theme within the AJSPH. Check out the video about the Launch [here](#).
Unfortunately, the Corona pandemic persisted all through 2021. As a result, many researchers worked on corona-related activities. The Expertise Centre Social Sciences Health and Well-being organised a symposium on the public’s response to COVID-19, and many researchers worked with Lifelines data to keep the Coronabarometer up to date. Research was conducted on a testing circuit at the university and the Coronamelder app, and several articles were published where researchers viewed the Corona crisis from the perspective of their scientific field (see for example this article on what history can teach us about the pandemic and this article on the possibility of an indirect vaccination obligation). In addition, we organized a Research Meetup on the implications of the pandemic for Public Health research in April and published a blog series on Corona.
AJSPH and University of Groningen Business School (UGBS) have launched a new Executive MBA track on Health. This 2-year Executive MBA program, run by Prof. dr. Jochen Mierau, helps health professionals to broaden their horizons and advance their economic and business knowledge.

The health landscape faces major challenges such as keeping healthcare affordable and accessible. To realize the transition from disease and care to health and healthy behavior requires innovative leaders with the right knowledge and skills that can effectuate change. The program aims to deliver such transition leaders.

The program is organized around three modules: health systems, strategic management, and value delivery. Participants simultaneously advance their leadership skills via the Effective Leadership Programme. This leadership program helps to reflect on participants’ strengths as well as identify development areas to further their managerial effectiveness. In September 2021, 11 students from, among others, UMCG, Accare, GGZ, Omring, Psychiatrie Noord have started the program. In the Summer of 2022, they will visit Copenhagen to explore the regional health system, and learn from health systems that tackle the same challenges differently.

Aletta has the ambition to make an impact in the field of Public Health. Not just by gathering and expanding our knowledge and skills, but also by passing them on.
Aletta’s Regional Year Challenge

In September 2021, the pilot of Aletta’s Regional Year Challenge began. Students from NHL Stenden, Hanze UAS and RUG/UMCG work on real life challenges by (public) health stakeholders contributing to the overall Year Challenge: “How might we enlarge the confidence and ability of our citizens to be effective in achieving optimal health?”

A unique feature of this collaboration is that participating students have access to a Lifelines public health dataset to explore and deepen their understanding of these challenges. Networking sessions are being organised to exchange learnings and align efforts. In June 2022 this initiative will be evaluated by all participants in an outcome harvest session.

Summer School Sustainable Health

Where does COVID-19 come from and was it avoidable in the first place? What are its connections with the Black Lives Matter movement, and why do minority groups experience worse outcome after infection? What has been the role of health systems in coping with the pandemic?

This summer school will be answering all these questions, and discuss potential answers to the most important one: what should the ‘new, better, normal’ after COVID-19 look like?
I-DAYS

In November, The Aletta's Talent Network of the AJSPH organized the 2021 EIT Health iDays for students in Groningen. On 2, 3 and 4 November, students experienced Health Innovation using the Design Thinking method. They were supported by trainers from Hanze Ontwerpfabriek. During these days they came up with creative and innovative solutions in multidisciplinary teams around the theme: ‘The healthiest city’.

At the Let’s Gro 2021 festival in the Groningen Forum, three student teams presented their perspective on how to make Groningen the healthiest city of the future. Creative solutions included a programme to promote exercise in local communities, light installations to boost mental health, and art as a way to induce meaningful conversations.

INNOVATING PUBLIC HEALTH

In 2021, the first edition of “Innovating Public Health - Navigating complex challenges and designing sustainable solutions” was organized. In this 6ECT EIT funded new program multidisciplinary teams of PhD students work together to solve current, real-life urgent Public Health challenges. The approach of the program is ‘learning by doing’. Students work on a number of societal challenges, proposed by societal partners of the AJSPH; various (healthcare) organisations in the cross-border region of Groningen (Netherlands) / Oldenburg (Germany) (our ‘clients’).

The program is geared towards achieving societal impact, using Design Thinking and impact entrepreneurship training as a method to develop user-centered solutions. By participating in this program, participants grow a relevant network, consisting of (healthcare) organisations, companies and other PhDs/postdocs; develop core competencies such as collaboration skills, design thinking and entrepreneurship; and contribute to solving highly complex and pressing Public Health challenges.
INNOVATION

Public Health issues can count on an increasing interest of a growing number of organisations, all from different perspectives. But the offer is fragmented and lacks focus. Aletta aims to be the connecting factor and to provide an integral approach when answering questions from the field.

PREVENTIEVERSNELLEN

The Prevention Accelerator is an initiative of UMCG, Aletta Jacobs School of Public Health and Menzis. The aim of the Prevention Accelerator is to support proven interventions and initiatives on a small scale in achieving impactful and structural embedding in society, thereby increasing the number of healthy life years.

Over the past year, a considerable number of initiatives have been assisted with issues related to, for example, strategy, business model and evidence. The first National Leefkracht Award was also presented in December. ‘Wedde dat ’t lukt’ is the winner with the initiative of the Village Supporter.

The Village Supporter is a bottom-up project of villages, for villages and by villages. She identifies, advises and knows how to make connections between different people and/or organisations. The Award is accompanied by a prize of € 25,000 for support in the field of scientific and economic validation. The board has chosen to spend this amount on research into the costs and revenues of the Village Supporter.
**ALETTA ADVIES HELPS QUESTIONS FROM PRACTICE**

The practice of public health involves large and small knowledge tasks. Academic research helps to answer those questions. Aletta Advies started as a consultancy branch of the AJSPH for the practical application of knowledge and research in the field of health. The question from practice is always central. Aletta Advies operates as an independent company and is part of Triade, an independent holding company of the UMCG. Available expertise from the network of AJSPH is used in the execution of the assignments, supplemented with experienced project management, process supervision and communication. The Aletta Health Grant is financed with the annual net result of Aletta Advies, with which junior researchers can pay for small and short-term research activities.

Current examples from clients:
- Monitoring & Evaluation: National Program Groningen, Regional Deal East Groningen, Opportunity for the Peat Colonies;
- Advice: Prevention Fund Assen, HiNoord;
- Research: Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, Municipality of Groningen, GGD Fryslan, ZonMw et al.

**HI!NOORD**

The Aletta Jacobs School of Public Health, together with the UMCG, the Centre of Expertise Healthy Ageing (Hanze University of Applied Sciences) and the Healthy Ageing Network Northern Netherlands (HANNN), is one of the four mainstays of the HiNoord program that started in the autumn of 2021. HiNoord is an ambitious program that aims to increase the impact of the health ecosystem in the Netherlands. The projects within the program are all based on the shared vision of the key players, gained during countless discussions with care innovators in Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe. Each project is aimed at removing a barrier or exploiting an opportunity towards a new, sustainable ecosystem in the northern Netherlands.
Population Health Data NL (PHDL) offers a public infrastructure that makes healthcare and health data accessible to everyone in a uniform manner. PHDL is working on a showcase where developers can offer tools and applications. PHDL is also working on a learning community, where users share insights and exchange practical experiences.

PHDL organizes a monthly meetup, where the best practices of health data are exchanged. In addition, PHDL is working on the 'Building Blocks Data-driven Regional Images' plan commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport to further help the 'Right Care in the Right Place' program to create dynamic regional images with current health data. By designing building blocks based on current data, each region does not have to reinvent the wheel individually when working on the regional images.
CITIZEN SCIENCE: HEAT STRESS IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

How hot does your house get in summer? And how does the heat affect your wellbeing? About 150 citizen scientists helped researchers Floris Bogaard and Allard Roest (Hanze University of Applied Sciences) in answering these questions in an action organised by CurioUs.

CurioUs is a citizen science project, initiated by Science LinX (Faculty of Science and Engineering, University Groningen), Forum Groningen and AJSPH. The aim of the project is to stimulate curious Northerners to perform science in their own living environment. In the meet-o-theek people can discover, borrow and sometimes build measuring devices and twice a year they can join a lively lecture and a citizen science action.

In June Floris Bogaard kicked off the heat stress action, together with climate scientist and weather presenter Peter Kuipers Munneke. About 150 households measured the heat in their houses over the summer and filled out surveys on their wellbeing and the quality of their sleep. These data helped the researchers to get more insight in heat stress and the effect on our health. In return, the public got practical knowledge on how to minimize the nuisance of heat in their houses.
LET'S GRO

On Let's Gro, the inspiration festival on the future of Groningen, Aletta was present with two activities. On the sixth floor of the Groningen Forum researchers looked back with the public on two of the citizen science actions of CurioUs and what it taught them about on heat stress and air pollution. In the main hall three interdisciplinary student groups presented their views on ‘The healthiest city’. They participated in the EIT Health iDays, organised by the Aletta Talent Network. In three days they used the principles of Design Thinking to find creative and innovative solutions for the healthy city of the future.

EUROPEAN RESEARCHERS’ NIGHT

We all know that it’s healthier to prepare meals with fresh produce and plenty of vegetables, fruit and whole grains than to live off takeaways of chips or pizza. But it isn’t always easy to go for the healthy option, and you’re not completely in control of that either. Where you live, who you share meals with, what you can afford, your stress level, and what happens to be on offer. It all plays a role in what and how much you put on your plate. That was the message of the European Researchers’ Night in Forum Groningen on September 24, 2021. The event, funded by the European Commission under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, consisted of an education programme in primary schools, two entertaining shows and the interactive exhibit Let’s dish up.
EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS: HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT FOOD?

Interdisciplinary food scientists, connected to the Aletta Jacobs School of Public Health, developed an education programme in cooperation with the Dutch Institute for Nature Education (IVN).

The goal of the education programme is to support the teaching of food skills in primary education. About 40 interactive one-hour workshops from scientists with a multidisciplinary background were given to pupils from age 8 to 12. The themes of the workshops were: why do you eat what you eat, how do you age healthily, what happens in your body after you eat, what did people eat in the past. For each lesson, a content concept was developed with interactive experiments. There was also dedicated time for the scientists to share their own research with the young audience.

ALETTA’S KITCHEN: THE GREATEST GRONINGER FOOD QUIZ

On 24 September, two interactive game shows called the ‘The Greatest Groningen Food Quiz’ took place at ‘Aletta’s Kitchen’ in the Groningen Forum. Both shows involved a fun quiz, built together with researchers, food professionals, nutritionists, citizens, and artists which allowed participating teams and the audience to discover striking scientific findings about ‘who/what determines what we eat’. At the same time, the audience was able to learn more about the profession of a researcher and how research experiments are done.

In the morning three schools competed to win the honour and a tour in the FC Groningen football stadium. This quiz was also streamed to about 40 classrooms. The evening show hosted three neighbourhood teams from de Wijert, Paddepoel and Vinkhuizen and was broadcasted by OOG tv.
INTERACTIVE EXHIBIT: ‘LET’S DISH UP!’

A fun and engaging exhibit on food science was located on the first floor of Forum Groningen for two weeks, starting the 24th of September. The exhibit ‘Let’s dish up!’ consists of an introduction panel, an interactive map with food data from the LifeLines cohort study, a provoking snack automat that gives you different opinions on sugar tax, a set table with meals throughout history and the future, and the exciting game Grocery-Go. It forms an informal and playful connection between researchers and the community.

LITTLE TROUBLEMAKERS ON TOUR

After a start in Forum Groningen and some time off due to covid regulations, the interactive exhibit ‘Little Troublemakers?’ started its tour through the three provinces in the northern Netherlands by visiting two community centres and a primary school. And many more locations have booked the exhibit for 2022.

‘Little Troublemakers?’ is the first of a series of public health exhibitions, Chronically Healthy. The traveling interactive exhibitions facilitate the people of northern Netherlands to take control of their own health and give scientists a platform to work with other northerners to formulate research questions and look for answers. In ‘Little Troublemakers?’ the public learns in a playful way how viruses and bacteria are your friend and enemy at the same time.
INTERNATIONALISATION

Public Health is always and everywhere a local phenomenon that takes place within and shapes a global context. This means that international exchange between researchers but also between policymakers is crucial in order to continuously learn from experiences elsewhere and to share the insights we develop in the northern Netherlands with the world.

VISIT OF A MEXICAN DELEGATION FROM UNAM

During the first week of November 2021, a delegation from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), visited the AJSPH. The Mexican delegation was integrated by professors Mario Rojas Russell (FES Zaragoza), Marcela Agudelo Botero (CIPPS, Faculty of Medicine) and Malaquías López Cervantes (Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine).

The goal of the visit was to develop an interdisciplinary academic network between the AJSPH, the FES Zaragoza and the Faculty of Medicine at UNAM in order to initiate joint research projects, including the exchange of students, and the organization of joint education courses and internships.

Some round tables were scheduled between the Mexican researchers and researchers from the UMCG and the Faculty of Spatial Sciences. Also, professor Malaquías participated as a panelist in the Aletta Global Health Launch and professor Mario as a speaker during the Aletta Cafe together with professor Eva Corpeleijn from the UMCG, where they discussed together with Aletta students on the obesity challenge from the Dutch and Mexican perspectives.
NEW CROSS-BORDER HEALTH RESEARCH PROJECTS WITHIN THE CBI

In 2021, the funding for the project "Comparison of healthcare structures, processes and outcomes in the northern German and Dutch cross-border region (CHARE GD-II)" was awarded. This project is funded to the tune of 1.4 million euros by the Volkswagen Foundation through the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture.

In 2022, six new cross-border healthcare research projects will start in the Cross-border Institute for Healthcare Systems and Prevention (CBI) led by researchers from the Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg (UOL) in Germany and the UG / UMCG in the northern Dutch-German border region. This has already been announced by the communications office of the UOL in a press release. These cross-border health studies are part of the project.

More information about these projects can be found here.
Fighting for what is right,
Makes life worth living.
Aletta H. Jacobs.