



## NVKC Foundation and flourishing of the Netherlands Society for Clinical Chemistry

In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decennia of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Germany had a leading position in what should evolve into clinical chemistry. Many Dutch physicians and medical specialists, having finished their medical training in the Netherlands, completed their education with a doctorate in this new field at the leading universities of Berlin, Marburg, Heidelberg and Tübingen. Once returned to the Netherlands they introduced their new knowledge and skills in microscopy and chemical analyses of body fluids in their own laboratories, the foundation of which was facilitated by renowned Dutch hospitals. In the early days interested medical specialists had the supervision, in an alliance with the hospital.

To broaden knowledge and to educate the laboratory assistants, several textbooks appeared in native Dutch; most successful were those written by F.A. Steensma (1877-1957) and E. Gorter (1881-1957) & W.C. de Graaff (1877-1944). The latter textbook counted not least than 7 editions over the period 1913-1956 which were used extensively.

Around World War II clinical chemistry developed rapidly, especially in the United States. The new methodologies as flame photometry, protein electrophoresis and thin layer chromatography asked for experts with a special education in analytical chemistry; merely training in medicine was inadequate. Gradually it was realized that the typical hospital laboratories of that time could only function optimally with appointment of qualified chemists to head the clinical chemistry laboratories, sometimes in combination with a specialist of internal medicine.

The need for a special professional society for clinical chemists and chemical oriented clinicians was advocated by dr. EC Noyons, dr. H. Neumann and dr. Th. Strengers in a meeting in Amsterdam at May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1947 where scientists, active or interested in what we now call the discipline of clinical chemistry met each other. This initiative was the prelude to the founding of the "Society for Clinical Chemists and Chemical Clinicians" on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1947 which later was recognized to be the first organization of this kind in the world. Dr. Noyons as

the first president of the Society was congratulated by the famous dr. DD van Slyke as follows: 'I am very glad to learn that Holland is taking the lead in forming a society of Clinical Chemistry'. Many chemists, pharmacists and physicians joined the new society which developed favourably. From its founding until present time, the majority of its members had a degree in (analytical) chemistry, biochemistry or related fields like pharmacy, plus an additional post-academic training in clinical chemistry, haematology etc. A minority of the society members are medical doctors. Derived from this, most Dutch hospitals have a clinical chemistry laboratory and separated microbiology and pathology laboratories.

Since 1947 until now over 700 members participated or are still active, including a number of colleagues working in Belgium or Germany. In 1931 the Organisation for Medical Specialists in the Netherlands had established a registration system for their members. One of the officially registered medical specialisations was that of laboratory-physicians. The new Society for Clinical Chemistry realized that they needed such an official registration system in order to protect both their professional and corporational interests and in 1950 such a register of clinical chemists was established. The number of Dutch hospital laboratories where members of the Society were active counted about 200 around the year 1990 but has nearly halved in the last two decades by fusion of hospitals.



Dr EC Noyons, first president



Dr Verschure addresses the first IFCC congress in 1954



## NETHERLANDS 1947

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As early as 1954 the Netherlands Society was given the honour to organize the 1<sup>st</sup> European, later to be called the 1<sup>st</sup> International IFCC Congress on Clinical Chemistry in Amsterdam. In 1987 the Society hosted the 13<sup>th</sup> IFCC Congress in The Hague and more recently again in Amsterdam in 2007 the successful 17<sup>th</sup> IFCC congress in combination with Euro Med Lab on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Netherlands Society of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine was held.

The Netherlands Society for Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (abbreviated NVKC in Dutch) stands amidst the development of clinical chemistry. The NVKC wants to change its focus from much attention on analytical and technical aspects towards optimal support of the clinicians. In other words going "from the lab to the clinic". The NVKC contributes to both national and international health care. All aspects of the discipline of laboratory medicine, whether scientific, educational, professional or organizational, are being managed and developed by more than 30 different committees and working groups, all consisting of NVKC members. These are guided and inspired by the executive board of governors and facilitated by a small but professional office located in the city of Utrecht.

The NVKC contributes significantly to EFML and IFCC activities. The Dutch laboratories were early adapters of new techniques, of total laboratory automation and laboratory accreditation. In fact the Dutch "Practice Guidelines" for laboratory accreditation stood partly model for the ISO15189 guideline. In addition, the contributions of Dutch colleagues to the latest development in internal and external quality control and in method harmonisation are internationally greatly appreciated. The yearly production of peer reviewed international papers on laboratory medicine numbers counts about 350, so on average every active member produces one publication each year.

Presently the profession is very popular among women, the number of women passed the number of men last year and Dr Claudia Pronk-Admiraal is now the first female president. Founded in 1947, the Netherlands Society for Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (NVKC) shows a long and solid tradition of scientific and professional development. At the same time the organization is constantly renewing itself in focus, research and education. After 67 years, the Dutch Society for Clinical Chemistry flourishes and is appreciated not least by the general public, which is served by a flourishing website where people can ask questions on clinical chemistry affairs and interpretation of laboratory test results. .