Nederland
Ondernemend
Innovatieland

Factsheet

(2)

Societal Innovation Agenda on Health

How can we meet the rising and changing demands for health care due to an ageing population and more people with chronic illnesses? And what can we do to meet the impending shortage of personnel? To find answers to these questions, a government project entitled "The Netherlands: land of entrepreneurship and innovation" (*Nederland Ondernemend Innovatieland*), NOI in short, is working together with businesses, knowledge institutes, care providers and insurance companies as part of NOI's Societal Innovation Agenda on Health.

The application of technology and ICT is playing an important role in these efforts and can help to solve personnel shortages. Prevention, too, is important: promoting exercise to check obesity, encouraging healthy diets, and stimulating the implementation of new concepts in the treatment of chronic illnesses such as pulmonary diseases, diabetes and senility. NOI is also committed to opening pathways to research, stimulating the development of knowledge and enterprise in the health care sector, and dealing with legislation that hinders progress in these areas.

INNOVATIONS OUTSIDE THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR

Better health and a better quality of life can be achieved not only by new methods of treatment and diagnosis but also by innovations outside of the health care sector. Schools, employers, sports clubs and housing corporations can make substantial contributions in this regard. Providing healthy food at schools is important, and so is the improvement of air quality (fine particles in the air in the Randstad) and the indoor environment in homes, schools, childcare centres and care institutions.

CHALLENGES

The greatest challenges for health care are:
- changing demands for health care: more elderly people affected with multiple disorders and more people with chronic illnesses;
- shortages on the labour market;
- making better use of ICT;
- the need expressed by patients for greater control themselves.

CHANGING DEMANDS FOR HEALTH CARE

Two of the emerging research areas, and ones for which the Netherlands has a very good reputation, are research on ageing and research into pulmonary diseases. Both are responding to a major problem we will soon be facing: an ageing population. NOI's Societal Innovation Agenda on Health wants to promote research into how to keep people healthier as they grow older and helping them live independently for as long as possible.

INCREASING LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY

When patients enter a residential care or nursing care facility, they want to return home as soon as possible. If we succeed in reducing the time people spend in one of these facilities, this creates beds for new patients. Another advantage to this is that people recover more quickly in their own familiar surroundings.

Innovation should also contribute to reducing workloads so that being employed in the health care sector remains attractive. For home care workers, for example, putting on and removing medical support hose is a difficult job. It would thus be of great help to them if patients could do this themselves by using a specialised device. Even though such a device exists, this new product is not in widespread use.

Work processes could also be made more efficient: scheduling the same operations in succession for a particular operating room, for example, or keeping patients from having to be transported to the other side of the hospital for X-rays or tests.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ICT

The use of ICT can make administrative processes more efficient. When patient information can be more easily liaised, requested and exchanged, this saves time and prevents the prescription of contradictory medications. Or, by using home electronics, an elderly person could speak into a device that will turn the light on or open the door.

SUPPORTING PATIENTS

In the future, computers, chips and sensors will make it possible to measure many bodily functions such as blood pressure, muscle tension, heart rhythm, and body fat or blood sugar levels. In the event of an impending problem, such a device would warn the patient. If necessary, the device could also notify the patient's family or a health care provider that the patient is suffering from a problem such as arrhythmia.

These technologies are not intended to cure patients but are used as preventive measures and, more particularly, for support. Patients have to accept that something is wrong with them. But given their limitations, these solutions can help make life as pleasant as possible. Technology can help patients deal with their illness so they have to make less use of their general practitioner or hospital and can remain independent longer. More importantly, this technology responds to patients' needs for greater control themselves: patients thus have access to information about their illness in their own surroundings and at any time of day.

ZIP

This Societal Innovation Agenda on Health is being developed into an innovation programme, the activities of which are being implemented under the auspices of the Health Care Innovation Platform *(ZorgInnovatiePlatform)*, ZIP in short. ZIP is included in the prime minister's Innovation Platform and consists of representatives from the private sector, knowledge institutes, health care and the government. More information (in Dutch) about ZIP can be found at www.zorginnovatieplatform.nl.

THE NETHERLANDS:
LAND OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

The Societal Innovation Agenda on Safety and Security is part of the government project entitled "The Netherlands: land of entrepreneurship and innovation" *(Nederland Ondernemend Innovatieland)*, NOI in short. NOI links solving public issues with enhancing the country's competitive strength. NOI invests in projects which stimulate knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship and works toward solving a number of problem areas which restrict or otherwise inhibit innovation, such as the limited development of know-how into real applications and the shortage of qualified technical staff.

This calls for a joint approach involving all sections of government. This has led to the establishment of the Knowledge and Innovation programme directorate which brings together representatives of several ministries. At the moment these are the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on the NOI project can be found at www.kennis-innovatie.nl. You can also phone +31 (0)70 379 74 43.

Nederland Ondernemend Innovatieland