

Heineken Young Scientists Award 2022 in the Social Sciences awarded to **Liesbeth van Vliet**



Liesbeth van Vliet
Photo: Bram Belloni



Amsterdam, 12 July 2022 – Health psychologist (1985), connected to Leiden University, has been awarded the Heineken Young Scientists Award 2022 in the field of Social Sciences. The jury praised her important contribution to improving the quality of healthcare for seriously ill patients, thanks to better communication between doctor and patient. Van Vliet's research into how communication can help and harm patients shows a valuable translation between research and society.

The Heineken Young Scientists Awards are awarded every two years to four highly promising young researchers working in the Netherlands. The winners are selected from four fields of science: Medical/Biomedical Sciences, Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences is responsible for the nomination and selection process. The award includes a cash prize of EUR 10,000 and a work of art. Previous laureates in the field of Social Sciences include Anna van Duijvenvoorde (2020) and Marie-José van Tol (2018). The award was created in 2010 by Charlene L. De Carvalho-Heineken.

'In addition to high quality medical care, there is a need for excellent information and emotional support for seriously ill patients and their relatives'

About the study

Van Vliet studies forms of communication that make patients feel better, e.g., experiencing less stress and better remembering information, or feel worse when confronted with a serious illness. She is at the cutting edge of health communication, palliative care, and placebo and nocebo effects. In the laboratory, for example, she uses video vignettes to study the effects of certain ways of communicating. She also uses observational research in the medical office

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to look at the specific elements of communication and how they relate to patient outcomes. For example, one of her analyses shows that terminally ill patients feel better under the care of more empathic doctors, and that they also remember more of a conversation with this type of doctor. This makes Van Vliet a versatile researcher who not only seeks answers to fundamental questions, but also knows how to translate the results into practice.

Jury praises direct application of knowledge in daily life

The jury admires the way in which Van Vliet actively engages in *outreach*. She regularly appears in newspapers and magazines, presents her work for professionals and other interested parties, and organises scientific events for a wide audience. Her work is also included in clinical bad-news guidelines and is thus directly applied in the consulting room on a daily basis. With her work, Van Vliet makes an important contribution to improving the quality of care for seriously ill patients.

About Liesbeth van Vliet

Liesbeth van Vliet (Lusaka, Zambia, 1985) studied clinical and health psychology at Erasmus University Rotterdam and obtained her PhD in 2013 for her research on communication during the transition to palliative breast cancer care at Utrecht University/Nivel. After her PhD, she worked for several years at the Cicely Saunders Institute at King's College London. Currently, Van Vliet is a lecturer at the Department of Health, Medical, and Neuropsychology and KWF Young Investigator at Leiden University. In addition to the Heineken Young Scientists Award, she has also received the KNAW Early Career Partnership (2021), the Dutch L'Oréal-UNESCO for Women in Science Award (2019), and a KWF Young Investigator Grant (2018).