



Two decades of knowledge exchange

This year the FIGON and the Dutch Medicine Days will be celebrating their 20th anniversary. Time to reflect on past and future of Dutch drug research.

Both FIGON and the Dutch Medicine Days (DMD) were established in 1999. From the start, this congress has been focusing on a broad audience of stakeholders in drug research. *Medicines* asked chairman of DMD's organising committee Gerard Rongen, professor at Radboudumc in Nijmegen, to evaluate 20 years of DMD.

What was the idea behind the DMD?

'The mission of the DMD has always been to provide a platform for all stakeholders in drug research to share ideas and present new knowledge. By facilitating collaboration between academia, industry and government the DMD creates an environment that supports innovation.'

Has this been successful?

'Yes, although there have been challenges. One is for industry-based researchers to

share their early study results and knowledge. Secondly, we're still missing a lot of investigator-initiated clinical trials sponsored by Dutch government.'

Which initiatives have been taken to better involve industry?

'Around 7 years ago, we established the Prix Galien Award, which recognises the best drug that entered the market that year. It provides a strong opportunity for industry to present themselves. TI-Pharma, initiated thanks to lobby work by FIGON, initiated new collaboration bet-

'The Prix Galien allows industry to present themselves'

ween academia and pharmaceutical companies. The scientific output has really advanced the content of the DMD and helped close the gap between academia and industry.

'Other collaborative initiatives, such as Lygature, will continue to support the DMD. Also, the Regulatory Science Network in the Netherlands had its birth within the DMD and provides a platform for all those involved in drug registration and pharmacovigilance. Last but not least, this year the DMD will be held near the Bio Science Park in Leiden. The idea is that this promotes connections with the smaller academic spin-offs that are based here.'

Has anything else changed during the past 20 years?

'Around 10 years ago we started a PhD competition, to better involve the younger researchers. They come up with exciting and fresh ideas for drug research. Also, after moving from a mainly drug-focused to a disease-orientated programme, with attempts to involve patients and clinicians, this year we opted for a programme centred around the development and appropriate use of medical therapies from molecule to human to population. This will make the programme more attractive to our target audience: all those involved in development and appropriate use of drugs.'

Do you remember any special moments in the history of the DMD?

'In 2016, the DMD featured a royal decoration ceremony. Recipient was our colleague Jan Raaijmakers – a major recognition of the societal impact of his work and of pharmacotherapeutic research in general.'

What can we expect for the next 20 years of DMD?

'I see a bright future ahead. I think the changes mentioned will indeed lead to an increase in participation from pharma companies from Dutch science parks. Also, I hope that the DMD can attract more European attention. The contributions from the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Association for Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics (EACPT) in this year's programme are a great start.' ●