

Perspectives on Knowledge Utilization in Life Sciences

January 31, 2025

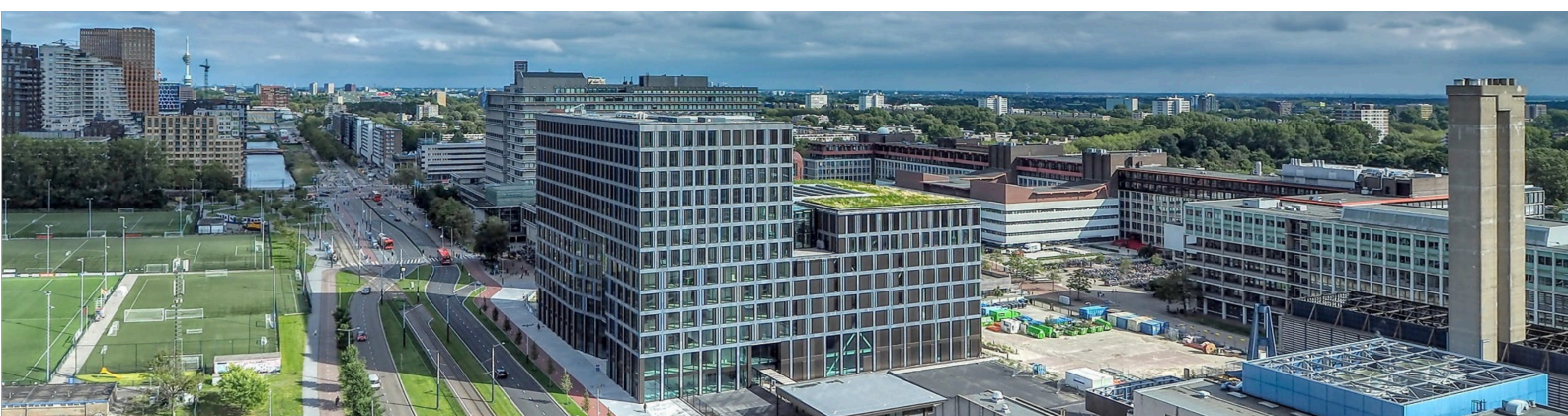
Theater 8, Rialto/VU (NU-4C47, De Boelelaan 1111, Amsterdam)

Knowledge utilization in the Life Sciences is vital to the improvement of healthcare outcomes, to address global challenges like public health and environmental sustainability, and also for advancing scientific research itself. By effectively applying their scientific discoveries, scientists can have tremendous impact, but the inroads towards effective knowledge utilization are complex and diverse. This symposium showcases different successful strategies for knowledge utilization in the life sciences, using different organizational structures inside and outside academia, different ways of exploiting and protecting intellectual property and different approaches to raising funds. With these insights the symposium aims to inspire future knowledge utilization, finding the optimal solution for each unique opportunity, exploiting the full potential of scientific advancements in the life sciences sector and producing tangible benefits for a healthier, more sustainable future. The symposium is free and open to the public, targeting students, life science professionals, and individuals working in the medtech and biotech sector. Registration is not required.

Matthijs Verhage & Iwan de Esch (organisers)

Program:

- 13:00 13:10 *Introduction* **Prof. dr. Iwan de Esch**, Director of Valorization, Faculty of Science, VU
- 13:10 13:30 *Avengers assemble: uniting academia, industry, and regulators to bring novel treatments for rare diseases*
Dr. Andrea Soto Padilla, Business Development Manager at Amsterdam UMC
- 13:40 14:00 *The role of venture capital in bringing new treatments to patients*
Dr. Cillian King, Managing Director EQT Life Sciences
- 14:10 14:30 *Tumor Infiltrating Lymphocyte (TIL) therapy for the treatment of patients with advanced melanoma: from an academic phase III trial to marketing authorization and sustained patient access for an affordable price*
Dr. Inge Jedema, head of Translational Cellular Therapy NKI
- 14:40 15:00 *Bridging academia & industry: accelerating drug development for neurological disorders*
Dr. Claudia Persoon, co-founder and CEO of Neurospector



The symposium precedes the inauguration lecture of Dr. Ruud Toonen, professor of Neuroscience and Knowledge Utilization, entitled: *Faltering nerve cells, from defective communication to recovery from brain diseases*. The lecture starts at 15:45 in the aula op de VU University (VU main building, De Boelelaan 1105, Amsterdam) and is open to the public.



Prof. dr. Iwan de Esch is professor in Drug Design & Synthesis and director of valorization at the Faculty of Science, VU University. Iwan obtained his PhD at VU University and received postdoctoral training at the University of Cambridge. Iwan participated in many large national and EU projects for Top Institute Pharma, STW, FP7, ITN and IMI. Iwan is the co-founder of three academic spin-out companies: De Novo Pharmaceuticals Ltd (a spin-out of the University of Cambridge), IOTA Pharmaceuticals Ltd and Griffin Discoveries BV (the latter two spun-out of VU University). As director of valorization, Iwan aims to stimulate a wide variety of valorization activities within the Faculty of Science.



Dr. Andrea Soto Padilla is a Business Development Manager at Amsterdam UMC. Andrea started her career as a scientist in neurodegeneration and social behavior research. After her time in academia, Andrea worked as a consultant for biotech firms, helping them develop their business plans and secure funding. A few years later, she became an Associate at EQT Life Sciences to build their Dementia Fund. Through this work, she met and later joined Amsterdam Neuroscience as a Business Developer to help push academic innovations into real-life solutions. Andrea is also executive board member of ESCO, a European consortium that prepares for trial readiness for a rare neurodevelopmental disease.



Dr. Cillian King is a Partner at the venture capital firm EQT Life Sciences. Before EQT, Cillian worked as an Investment Manager for Life Science Partners and Swanbridge Capital and as an independent consultant for early-stage bio/medtech companies. Cillian obtained his PhD in molecular neuroscience at CNCR, VU University. Cillian has been a major catalyst in translating academic discoveries into business opportunities by data-driven decision-making, designing investment strategies and promoting sustainable growth. Cillian is known for connecting stakeholders, from investors and private companies to academic institutions and individual scientists.



Dr. Inge Jedema is head of Translational Cellular Therapy at The Netherlands Cancer Institute. Until 2020, Inge was head of the laboratory for Translational Hematology at Leiden UMC and developed several cellular immunotherapy strategies and clinical trials. Most recently Inge and her colleagues became nationally known for developing a treatment for metastatic skin cancer without the help of commercial investors. The project is unique in that it was all funded publicly (ZonMW, KWF, EU). If the team obtains approval from the EMA, it will be the first time that an academic hospital brings a complex cell therapy to the market. Because the therapeutic product will be offered via a not for profit model, the treatment is approximately five times cheaper than a comparable commercial therapy.



Dr. Claudia Persoon is co-founder and CEO of Neurospecter, a contract research organization within the university that accelerates drug development for psychiatric and neurological disorders by combining the use of human (patient-derived) neurons and scale-able functional assays. Claudia studied life sciences in Amsterdam and obtained her PhD in cellular neurosciences at CNCR, VU University. Claudia received entrepreneurship training at Ace Incubator where she won a scholarship for best business plan and obtained several spin-out grants (ZonMW Off Road, ERC-PoC) to establish Neurospecter. Neurospecter is a unique new solution for knowledge utilization by VU and Amsterdam UMC employers.