

## In memoriam Wim van der Giessen, MD, PhD, 1954-2011

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*Photo courtesy of ICIN/Bob Karhof*

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, less than two weeks after learning he was severely ill, Wim van der Giessen passed away. He and his family were given little time to come to grips with the sudden onset and dramatic course of his disease.

He will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

Wim studied medicine at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam and started his career in research as a medical student in the department of Experimental Cardiology. After receiving his MD, he served several fellowships between 1980 and 1983 here at the Erasmus Medical Centre as well as in the department of Pharmacology at the University of Michigan in the USA. He finalised his training in Cardiology in 1987 and was appointed as staff of the section of Experimental Cardiology. Here he finished his PhD in 1990 under supervision of Professors Verdouw, Roelandt and Hugenholtz entitled: "Experimental coronary artery occlusion and reperfusion".

Together we built a team in Experimental Interventional Cardiology at the Thorax Center where Wim was particularly appreciated for his pioneering mentality and ideas in the pre-clinical phase of our research with stents, which formed a "significant" part of our research. His innovative and creative intelligence was seen as early as 1988 when he published an article on endothelial cell seeding of coronary stents. In the clinical field, he was a joy to work with, especially when treating patients in difficult situations, and he created a bridge between experimental and clinical work as was illustrated by the side-by-side publications on the heparin coated stents, and experimental studies to understand the edge effects of radioac-

tive stents by using half radioactive stents. Landmark papers such as "Inflammatory sequelae of polymers in the coronary vasculature" were the result of multicentre experimental studies with renowned scientists such as Rob Schwartz, David Holmes and Eric Topol from the Mayo and Cleveland Clinics in the US.

In 2005, Wim van der Giessen was named to the prestigious Inter-University Cardiology Institute of the Netherlands (ICIN) professorship for the special chair in "Pathophysiology of acute coronary syndromes" at Erasmus University. It was only a few months ago, that his chaired position on behalf of the ICIN professorship was extended to November of 2015. As a member of the scientific council of the ICIN, he played a key-role in studies pertaining to limiting reperfusion-injury of the myocardium. He was also treasurer of the Dutch Atherosclerosis society.

Wim van der Giessen was above all a man who enjoyed the finer aspects of life, including his cigar and a good glass of wine. He approached the world with a unique sense of humour and nuance. Every question was approached with a period of silence, followed by the characteristic twisting of his moustache and a meditative "hmmm". Then an answer would follow that, even for the most delicate of issues, was of an unprecedented clarity and simplicity.

His personal and professional contributions to the courses in Rotterdam, The Hague and Paris were priceless as were his contributions to the field of Experimental Interventional Cardiology and we will be forever grateful for having experienced his presence and promise to do our utmost build on his legacy.

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