

# EAP VOICES

## „Paediatricians should do more to protect children from tobacco’

Europe needs to protect its children and adolescents against the adverse effects of smoking. In a recent publication, the European Academy of Paediatrics encourages governments in Europe to implement the measures defined in the WHO Framework Convention of Tobacco Control. Discouraging smoking starts with paediatricians who are knowledgeable about the effects of tobacco use. Internationally, the Netherlands scores lowest when it comes to knowledge about smoking. Dutch paediatric pulmonologist Noor Rijkers dedicates herself to a „Smokefree Generation“. This is an interview in two parts about what European paediatricians can do, inside and outside of the consulting room.

*Karoly Illy & Lenneke Schrier*

## PART 2: what paediatricians can do outside of their consulting room

***In the Netherlands, several professional organisations make an effort to make the Dutch society smoke-free. You chair the working group NoSmoKind! of the Dutch Paediatric Society. What have been gear-change points for you and what do you advise paediatricians in other European countries if they want to start a similar movement of change?***

First, you need someone who is completely committed to and passionate about this topic, and who wants to make a change. Someone who feels the need to share this important message. Change management takes time and energy, but time and energy are less important if you find something very important. I always say: „Get inspired!“ Secondly, having a recognizable name really helps. For us, it helped that our working group had the name „NoSmoKind!“, which means „No Smoking Kids“, a name that is easy to remember. Furthermore, it is important to start with an active group. We were fortunate to have Paul Brand in our group, a Dutch paediatrician with a large professional network and links to medical scientific journals. We started with organizing conferences, writing articles and columns and giving presentations and workshops. This enabled us to spread our message to various channels. The Dutch Paediatric Society also adopted our message right from the beginning and as such helped us to put it on the national agenda. Recently, a position statement was published.

### *Alliance with other stakeholders*

In The Netherlands, it has also been important that the Dutch umbrella organization of medical doctors, the Royal Dutch Society for Advancing Medicine, adopted its position about tobacco use. Medical doctors have a much more important role towards the government than we tend to think; the government really considers the position of medical doctors in its decisions. In the end, you need some kind of collaboration with the government, as the government can take measures that really have impact. Paediatricians have been too silent for too long. Fortunately, the Dutch Ministry for Health approached NoSmoKind! asking how they could support us. We told them that paediatricians get involved too late, and that you need to start with the exposure to tobacco during pregnancy. The Dutch Ministry then organized a network meeting with all stakeholders, including those involved in perinatal care. The resulting task force is chaired by a Dutch gynaecologist and I am the vice president. It is important to have an umbrella organization in which you can unite all stakeholders and initiatives, from getting the school playground smoke-free to motivating pregnant women to quit smoking. Uniting all stakeholders leads to a „flywheel effect“. In the Netherlands, all stakeholders and initiatives have been united in the „Alliance The Netherlands Smoke-free!“. The goal of de ANR is a smoke-free generation for all children born from 2017. It that means all children born in 2017 and thereafter should grow up in a smoke-free environment and should not be tempted to start smoking. Measures will be

implemented sequentially. Shortly, we will also focus on the negative effects of smoking. In the United Kingdom, this approach has been very effective, with strong examples including the „Don't be the one“ and „Breathe“ campaigns [box]. In addition, the Trimbos institute will also focus on demystifying tobacco use.

### Local ambassadors

Finally, local ambassadors are also important. We train paediatricians in motivational interviewing. After the training, we ask them to be ambassadors in their own hospitals. At the hospital level, project groups should develop that initiate local changes. The Dutch Paediatric Society supports the appointment of local ambassadors, for example paediatricians or neonatologists. The Trimbos Institute has developed source material that ambassadors can use.

#### Want to get inspired?

- Wanda de Kanter and Pauline Dekker two Dutch pulmonologists who actively advocate motivational interviewing about ["the pro's of smoking"](#)
  - Wanda de Kanter and Pauline Dekker about replacement smokers [TEDx replacement smokers](#)
  - [Position statement of Dutch Paediatric Society](#)  
The Dutch Paediatric Society advocates for
    - Substantial increase in tax measures and decrease in number of selling points
    - Complete ban on the display of tobacco products
    - Plain packaging
    - Decrease in influence of tobacco industry
    - Free assistance to quit smoking
- In addition, the Dutch Paediatric Society stresses that paediatricians are role models for their patients and an important source of information. Paediatricians should actively encourage parents and adolescents to quit smoking. Paediatricians don't use tobacco on the job and don't smell of smoke.
- Dutch campaign „Smoke-free Generation“(including [video](#) with English subtitles)
  - **Aim: Protecting youth against tobacco.** We want a society in which every child born in 2017 and thereafter grows up in a smoke-free environment. In addition, these children should never decide to start using tobacco.
  - **How?** Through measures that protect children in every life phase from exposure to tobacco and temptations to start smoking
  - **Measures:** education, effective quit-smoking-coaching services and tax measures plus measures that sequentially lead to smoke-free pregnancies, smoke-free playgrounds, ban on display of tobacco products, smoke-free day care, plain packaging, smoke-free primary schools and sports clubs, and smoke-free secondary schools
  - UK campaign ["Don't be the one"](#)
  - UK campaign ["Take a deep breath"](#)

**One of the goals of this year's „World No Tobacco Day“ Campaign is to demonstrate how individuals can contribute to making a sustainable, tobacco-free world. How can individual paediatricians contribute?**

A paediatrician is a role model for their patients and an important source of information about the negative effects of tobacco. In addition to motivating parents and children to quit smoking, paediatricians can help to prevent children and adolescents from starting to smoking. Growing up in a smoke-free environment contributes to this. This means that school yards, sports fields,

playgrounds, amusement parks, cars and hospitals should be smoke-free.

### Being a role model outside the consulting room

As a paediatrician, you can discuss smoking outside of your consulting room as well, for example at school yards or in sports clubs, or with the Board of Directors of your hospital. Spread the message that smoking is a severe addiction and not a free choice and make an effort to get public spaces smoke-free. Studies have shown that a smoking ban in public spaces or at work leads to a 10% reduction in premature births and 10% reduction in hospital admissions for asthma.

### All European governments should implement the FCTC obligations

The World Health Organization's *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control* (FCTC) is based on interventions like banning smoking, but also on other effective measures, like price and tax measures, packaging and labelling of tobacco products, sales to minors and regulation of tobacco advertising and promotion.

Adherence to FCTC framework can protect our youth from the temptation to start smoking tobacco. For example, advertising, promotion and marketing efforts of the tobacco industry influence adolescent smoking behaviour, often to a greater extent than it influences adult behaviour. The FCTC Framework has been ratified by 50 out of the 53 countries in Europe, but has not yet been implemented in full by most. For example, only four countries have a comprehensive ban on all forms of direct and indirect advertising of tobacco products and only three countries require large pictorial warning labels on cigarette packages with all appropriate characteristics. Countries like Norway and the United Kingdom adhere to most of the obligations, but the Netherlands did moderately, although this is changing, fortunately. Australia is a continent which has implemented all measures. It would be wonderful if Europe would follow this example. It is much more effective if all countries in Europe implement the measures and not just a few, as the tobacco industry operates in a cross-border manner. Paediatricians in Europe could urge their governments to implement the FCTC obligations. Governments listen to medical doctors!

### **What does the European Syllabus for Core Training in Paediatrics say?**

Paediatric trainees, as health advocates, must responsibly use their influence and expertise to advance child health as well as the well-being of individual patients, families, communities and populations

### **How paediatricians across Europe can contribute to making a tobacco-free world**

- Know that comprehensive tobacco control is an obligation under the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The interests of children should take precedence over those of the tobacco industry.
- Discuss smoking during every consultation using the technique of motivational interviewing, regardless of the presenting symptoms.
- Discuss smoking outside of your consulting room, for example at school yards or sports clubs. As a paediatrician, you are a role model and expert.
- Contribute to the dissemination of information about the negative effects of tobacco use.
- Mobilise your professional society.
- Urge your government to implement the FCTC obligations.

## **Questions?**



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