

How to improve health care and quality of life for cancer patients: presenting the results of a Science Shop project at the International Forum

Between June 2016 and February 2018, the Science Shop conducted a project on smell and taste alterations in cancer patients who undergo chemotherapy. This project was a collaboration between the HungerNdThirst Foundation and the department of Human Nutrition and Health at Wageningen University and Research.

The outcomes of the project were translated into four factsheets, aimed at physicians, nurses, dieticians and patients. The factsheets provide tips and advices on dealing with smell and taste alterations to use in daily life and health care. These factsheets can be used to create more awareness on smell and taste alterations in cancer patients. After completion of the project, the HungerNdThirst Foundation used the results from the project to develop the 'ATE' (Awareness Through Experience) Cookies. These cookies give the same taste alterations as cancer patients suffer from.

International Forum on Quality and Safety in Health Care

The HungerNdThirst Foundation was invited to present a poster on these ATE Cookies at the 'International Forum on Quality & Safety in Health Care'. Elbrich Postma, project leader of the project, also was invited to presented a poster on results from the project. The conference was organized in Glasgow on March 27 – 29. It was visited by over 3.500 participants from 74 different countries around the world. The conference brings together health care professionals, researchers and patients and focusses on the context of the patient and health care professionals and barriers they meet. Studying these barriers enables health care professionals to give people the right support at the right moment. The conference was therefore perfect in line with the problems we addressed in the Science Shop project on smell and taste alterations.

Elbrich Postma, researcher at Wageningen University and project leader: on As a researcher I believe it is very important to involve patients in my research. Therefore, I was happy the Science Shop enabled me to visit the International Forum together with the HungerNdThirst Foundation. There were many opportunities to meet other researchers during the conference. It was really interesting to learn more on their research and point of view on how to involve patients in research. We were also invited to join a dinner with several patient representatives. The conference highly encourages patients to join the conference, to enable them to give their point of view on safety and quality in health care. It was very inspiring to hear their point of view on the research in this field. For me, the sessions on leadership in improvement science were an important take-home message. They showed me how values can be used to shape behavior and how agency and purposeful actions can really make a change for both patients and health care professionals.

Robert Greene, president of the HungerNdThirst Foundation: I believe the collaboration between our foundation and the Science Shop can be an example for other organizations. During the poster sessions I spoke to several visitors about this collaboration. For us, the project was a first step towards further development of practical solutions and tools. We received enthusiastic responses on the project and our ATE Cookies. For me, the International Forum was a great opportunity to extend my network and to learn more on quality and safety in health care. I would definitely visit the conference again next year!