

Our Meuse herbs are very specifically ours. These herbs grow here due to the fact that the Meuse is a very important bird migration river. The birds land on the banks of the rivers carrying seeds on their feet. These seeds germinate in the soggy ground and eventually become herbs. Dutch Limburg has not developed these herbs, but we have. These herbs were used by our forebears to make medicinal remedies. For that reason, the oldest pharmacy in Belgium came into being here in Maaseik and the second oldest in Rekem. These herbs are beneficial to the bronchial tubes and are purifying. There are also willows growing along the banks of the Meuse. Our forebears cooked the bark and the resulting potion was used as a powerful medicine that worked like aspirin. Willow has the temperature reducing salicylic acid, the Greeks and Romans knew that too.

With regard to the future, we are looking for people and businesses that are willing to invest in the region. Innovation is our strong point. We are also strong in logistics as we are located in the heart of Europe and can easily adapt to the North as well as South. Because of this, we serve as a huge transfer hub between North and South Europe. Belgian-Limburg has a population of 800,000. That scale makes it possible to experiment. It means we have a different kind of prosperity; a spiritual prosperity that eventually also carries on in material values.

We use the aura of TEFAF to position the region. It does not take long to get to Brussels from here, Liège is only 25 kilometres away and it is only 30 kilometres from Maastricht. Cologne and Aachen are also nearby. Limburg is not far away, it only seems so in a psychological sense."

For more information about Belgian Limburg and about events in the region during TEFAF, please see: Toerisme Limburg, Universiteitslaan 3, B-3500 Hasselt, info@toerismelimburg.be and www.toerismelimburg.be

The TEFAF Oncology Chair

Dr. Gerard Bos

The TEFAF Oncology Chair was established five years ago by a simple telephone call. Dr Gerard Bos, MD, PhD and Professor Frans Ramaekers, PhD are two scientists who will be your guides in the University Hospital Maastricht: the Maastricht UMC+.



Dr Gerard Bos:
"In a few years time, this research will provide a new cancer treatment."

Dr Gerard Bos is a haematologist at the University Hospital Maastricht (MUMC+). His field is blood cancer including leukaemia and lymphoma. He also carries out research and manages patient care and is chairman of the project group HFL Cancer Research foundation.

Dr Frans Ramaekers is interim scientific director of the Research Institute GROW (School for Oncology and Developmental Biology). GROW focuses on research and teaching of (epi)genetic, cellular and (micro) environmental factors underlying normal (embryonic and foetal) and abnormal (cancer) development. Special emphasis is placed on translational research aiming at innovative approaches for individualizing disease prevention, patient diagnostics and treatment. In addition, he is head of the department of Molecular Cell Biology at the MUMC+.

Frans Ramaekers: "The TEFAP Oncology Chair was established in 2005 by the Board of Trustees of TEFAP. This year, for the third time, a professor in oncology has been appointed and has been teaching in Maastricht at a regular basis. Twice, we had a professor from America and now a professor from Leuven, Dr Catherine Verfaillie, who works in the field of stem cells in relation to the development of cancer. All professors give master classes and lectures and have discussions with young researchers and trainee doctors."

Gerard Bos: "The University Hospital Maastricht would like to play a more active role in finding support for our own research. To that end, we are seeking funding. Of course, we make use of other funds such as the Koningin Wilhelmina Fonds (KWF, Dutch Cancer Society) but we also want to attract more funding from our own region. Five years ago, within the policy of the hospital and the research institute, I took that task upon myself. The Maastricht University Hospital established the Limburg Health Foundation for that purpose and endeavours to raise funds by this means. We have a number of primary targets: heart and vascular disease, chronic illnesses, mental disease and cancer for which the Health Foundation Limburg Kanker Researchfonds (HFL Cancer Research Fund) was established. HFL Cancer Research fund is a partner of KWF, the national foundation with which we closely collaborate. In this capacity, we try to engage the region in fund raising and TEFAP is, of course, part of that. Five years ago, we contacted TEFAP and asked if they could help us. The director, Paul Hustinx, reacted very positively. The request for help was subsequently discussed by the Board of Trustees of TEFAP. They said, "Yes, we would like to help you. TEFAP does not only want to present itself through art, but also through a good cause and in that way give something back to society."

Another person who reacted positively to our request for help was Andre Rieu, the violinist and conductor from Maastricht. He is widely known

to the public, nationally and internationally, through his performances of popular classical works. He is our official ambassador.

In 2009 we found 600 new contributors but that number must be increased to 6000. We have a long way to go, but we are on the right track. So we are very glad to have the support of TEFAP."

Frans Ramaekers: "The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of TEFAP, Ben Janssens, has promised to continue the relationship with the HFL Cancer Research Foundation. Our intention is to retain the TEFAP Oncology Chair. We are now investigating who will become the next Chair holder. We also intend to provide scholarships; a new project for students from abroad who can come and carry out research and obtain their doctorate within our research school.

Gerard Bos continues: "The reason that TEFAP supports us, has to do with 'Leading in Learning', the focus of our university. 'Learning' focuses on students and 'Leading' focuses on the professor we invite at an international level. We are very happy with TEFAP's support as an organisation; however it would also be wonderful if the participants and visitors of TEFAP supported us. Imagine a TEFAP exhibitor from South America agreeing to support a scholarship, wouldn't that be great? We are investigating the possibility of increasing commitment through establishing 'Leading in Learning' internationally. It is a growth scenario which we hope will also appeal to the TEFAP visitor from abroad.

The TEFAP Oncology Chair has, for example, contributed to intestinal cancer research in which noticeable progress has been made over

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the past few years. Possibilities for an early diagnosis have been developed and we are now developing this further in a permanent collaboration with a medical group in Baltimore to which the first TEFAF Oncology Chair was awarded. We are trying to adopt the international character of TEFAF so that we can continue a stable relationship through the scholarships and the professors.

The expertise of these renowned professors is held in high regard. It is fantastic that they want to come to Maastricht to give their master classes.

In our research programmes we take many steps that are probably not directly evident to the public, but all these small steps together will eventually lead to new treatment protocols for patients with cancer."

Frans Ramaekers: "Each chair period is for a year. In that year the visiting professor travels a number of times to the Netherlands to give master classes and lectures. He or she does not do this on a fulltime basis. It is often somebody we already have contact with, within the framework of ongoing research. This was the case with Dr Catherine Verfaillie who studied for ten years in the US and who is now head of the Interdepartmental Stem Cell Research Institute in Leuven. She was happy to accept the TEFAF Chair for 2009. Her master class is mainly directed at young researchers. Work is discussed with the professor and it is therefore possible to check if you are on the right track. The group discussions are very lively and a great deal of valuable information is obtained in this way.

This mutual contact eventually becomes an established collaboration. Students from Maastricht travel to the laboratories of former TEFAF

Chair holders to carry out research. A structural relationship is built up in this way."

Gerard Bos: "We recently started a business club, a further activity of the Limburg Cancer Research Foundation. Members are allowed to have a look behind the scenes of a hospital organisation with their company and, for example, see what robot surgery is all about. It is not only the director who is given this opportunity but also the doorman or the warehouse assistant. In addition, we will also organize a social event for members of the business club during TEFAF.

Guy Peters, president of the Maastricht University Medical Centre, underlines the importance of TEFAF support: "scientific research remains the beating heart of evidence based medicine. There are numerous breakthroughs in various research disciplines around the phenomena of life, health and care and there is more cooperation between these scientists than there ever was before. We thank TEFAF for establishing the Oncology Chair and supporting a scholarship."

If you or your company would like to contribute to the development of cancer research or receive more information, please go to www.kankerikhelp.nl or www.cancerresearchfund.eu