



Dr. Dick J. Van Dijk is president of the *Association for Muscular Diseases in the Netherlands*: <https://www.spierziekten.nl/>. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Polio Conference in Amsterdam (June 25, 2014 - June 27, 2014) he declared in the Plenary Opening:

The Association doesn't only fight for the interests of polio patients. We support the interests of all patients who suffer from a muscular disease. There are hundreds of muscular diseases, which we have divided into *diagnostic groups*. Thus we have diagnostic groups for ALS, Becker, Duchenne and SMA, to mention but a few examples. Our Association brings the members into contact with each other and – equally important – it brings the members into contact with professionals. Our motto is: *one fellow-sufferer + one fellow-sufferer equals two allies*. The same is true of our relationship with researchers and caregivers. We are allies and we fight our battles together!

On the initiative of the Association for Muscular diseases in the Netherlands, it was possible to establish a *Polio Expertise Centre* in the Academic Hospital in Amsterdam. Members of the *diagnostic group Post Polio* are closely involved in the realization of this project and have a seat in the advisory council.

In conjunction with this Muscle Fund we have established a *Muscle Academy*. In the meantime hundreds of members have been introduced to our online courses.

Everybody has a personal page on our website, with a growing amount of information about his or her particular muscular disease. And that is not all: in cooperation with prominent researchers we produce the so-called *Roadmaps to therapy and care*, roadmaps that in due course should lead to better care and more effective treatments.

It emphatically underlines the importance of *cooperation* of professionals and experts-by-experience. One of the most important initiatives of the Association is that we regard the patients as data carriers. We supply patients suffering from a rare disease with the knowledge and information, which they can transfer to their caregivers. Based on their own strength and through their own efforts! Our information folders for doctors and therapists have become famous in the meantime. Thus an ability to cope has been developed, which amounts to much more than just following the advice: 'If you can't walk, crawl!' Our limitation has become part of our identity and part of our solidarity. We will never forget that; we are proud of it!



The personal website of dr. Dick J. Van Dijk is: <http://www.dickjvandijk.nl/>.