

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today you were expecting minister Schippers. Unfortunately, there is no job as uncertain as that of minister. You intend to attend a congress – and then, all of a sudden something very important intervenes. That is what happened this time as well. The minister was looking forward to presenting this speech to you, however one week ago it proved impossible for her to do so today. That is why I am here now. My name is Bas van den Dungen and I am the Director-General of Curative Care – Minister Schippers' right hand when it comes to hospital care.

A healthcare institution nowadays is very similar to a high tech industrial complex. Upon entering you are amazed by all the technical gadgets there: Hospital beds that send a signal when there's a chance that the patient might fall out of bed, transmitters that track dementing elderly people when they tend to wander off, I could talk for hours regarding these kinds of innovations.

They are the solution for the growing costs of healthcare: Smart technology is often both better and cheaper. That is exactly why it is so important to know that there are technicians such as yourselves that make sure all tubes are in top condition, that all the measuring instruments are working properly and that there is a guaranteed power supply.

That is your job. Often behind the screens, but crucial. One can compare it to a theater. The actors are on stage, but if they are not properly lighted, unintelligible because the microphones do not work or standing in front of a rickety décor, then the drama truly becomes a drama. If you don't do your job properly, the surgeons cannot operate, patients will get sick due to a lack of fresh, infection free air and new born babies might not survive.

Your job thus is crucial for health care. And, because healthcare engineering is becoming an increasingly important factor, your job is becoming ever more important.

It is therefore very interesting that the NVTG has chosen to present a plan for the implementation a quality register this year.

The NVTG states that it is normal that medical personnel are required to register themselves and that they lose their registration if they do not refresh their knowledge every year.

Why should this not be a requirement for technical personnel as well? Being included in such a register would then mean: This engineer has followed and completed a proper education and makes sure that his knowledge is up to date. It means that he will not be flabbergasted when new equipment does not function properly. I believe that this is a good initiative.

Now regarding professionalism. The wish to stay up to date and to join the newest developments, the demands of this day and age – they lead me to the subject of this contribution: The development of “sustainable care”.

One can, without a doubt, argue that sustainability currently is one of the most important themes. The past year representatives of 195 countries gathered in Paris for a top conference on climate. The most important agreement here was working towards a substantial decrease of the emission of greenhouse gases and the use of fossil fuels. This requires commitment from the entire society.

Therefore it also requires commitment from the healthcare sector, a sector responsible for fiver percent of the CO₂-emission. I have been told that exactly here lie the chances for reducing costs through saving energy.

Furthermore regarding sustainability: The contamination of water by pharmaceutical residues is also an important theme. Although most of the pharmaceutical residues enter the sewer water via private households, it is worrying that residues of specific pharmaceuticals – such as cytostatic agents and antibiotics – enter the water via healthcare institutions. Hence it gladdens me that in The Netherlands the healthcare sector has taken the initiative to make its sector more sustainable.

Half a year ago a coalition of 54 parties has made agreements regarding this subject – parties ranging from healthcare providers to municipalities and from universities to companies. One of these of course was the NVTG. These agreements were written down in a “Green Deal”. This “Green Deal” is a cooperation between the government, companies and social institutions.

Working together to realize concrete initiatives regarding sustainability is by no means a luxury as the healthcare sector has a number of challenges regarding this subject. It is therefore a good thing that for example the Dutch Association for Hospitals, another party that has signed the “Green Deal”, has named sustainability as one of the key issues for 2020. This would seem like a good start. It would be recommendable for all healthcare institutes and umbrella organizations to follow their example.

This because saving energy, sustainable procurement and the prevention of the wasting of materials is not only good for the environment but also for the financial state of organizations.

Ten years ago, sustainability was a difficult topic in healthcare. It mainly cost money, and these costs most certainly were higher than the financial benefits they promised. This has changed spectacularly. Money can now be made through sustainability. According to TNO (the Netherlands Organisation for applied scientific research), a hundred million Euros can be saved in healthcare when the right measures are taken.

What herein is the role of the technical staff, the members of the NVTG (and IFHE)? To me this is clear. You have the essential knowledge regarding buildings and engineering. You have the knowledge needed to advise institutions. You are the key to increasing the sustainability in business operations.

There are a number of beautiful tools that can help you along the way. One of these is the “Environmental Thermometer” created by the Milieu Platform Zorg. This is a system with concrete measures with which healthcare providers can increase the sustainability of their operations step by step and along the entire width of the organization, for example through saving energy and saving water but also through preventing the waste of food.



As of January 1st this year, sustainability no longer is a non-committal issue. According to the European guidelines for energy, the energy use of healthcare institutes from now on has to be tested every four years. Thus institutions are already required to take the first step: Finding out how the institution is doing right now. How much is spent on energy? Is this done in a smart enough way? Where can we save more energy?

Research has shown that healthcare institutes can save up to 15 percent on energy use by following simple measures. This could save an average institution up to €20.000 a year, and in the case of hospitals a multitude more. Here lies a beautiful task for the NVTG and IFHE.

Some hospitals have already started. The UMC Groningen for example has placed water efficient taps throughout the hospital. By doing so it has saved 25 million liters of water – a quarter of the total water use of the hospital. The Haga hospital in The Hague has covered the roof of its building with stonecrop, thus providing extra insulation that as a bonus also looks pretty. Furthermore two hospitals in Delft and Rotterdam have installed the Pharmafilter. This is a system that both reduces hospital waste, the amount of garbage transports and the emission of CO₂, and purifies the waste water thus filtering out 80% of pharmaceutical residues and hormone disrupting chemicals. I believe that is a good thing that you have made this important topic a key issue of your organization.

It would be great if all healthcare institutes would not only commit to meeting the requirements, but also to surpassing these, by working on their own lasting system for sustainability and energy management. By making sure to keep paying attention to this topic, not to only do so for now and because they have to. Those who have signed the “Green Deal” strive to have 80% of the hospitals and 50% of the other healthcare institutes working on a plan of their own to increase sustainability and energy management. The NVTG will do all in its power to achieve this goal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Half a year ago the minister was present at the presentation of the “Green Deal”. At this congress, we would like to create international attention to the subject of sustainability in healthcare. Maybe we can make the “Green Deal” a new Dutch export product.

The Dutch are proud of their healthcare. On every international list we are ranked high when it comes to quality. Would it not be great if we could also top the rankings regarding the most sustainable healthcare institutes in a couple of years.

Thank you for your attention.