

# APH HEALTH BEHAVIOR & CHRONIC DISEASE – TRAVEL GRANT

*RESEARCH VISIT TO GOTHENBURG UNIVERSITY AND THE GOTHENBURG CENTER FOR PERSON-CENTERED CARE IN GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN – SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2024*

MARLINDE IS A FOURTH YEAR PHD STUDENT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH OF AMSTERDAM UMC. SHE WAS GRANTED A TRAVEL GRANT TO VISIT THE RESEARCH GROUP OF HANNA GYLLENSTEN AT GOTHENBURG UNIVERSITY FOR 8 WEEKS IN THE FALL OF 2024.

The travel grant from APH HBCD provided me with the chance to visit the Centre for Person-centered Care (GPCC) in Gothenburg. The GPCC is a national interdisciplinary research center that was found in 2010, as part of the Swedish Governments strategic investment in research. Within this group, researchers collaborate in a variety of (inter)national projects in which the partnership between patients and their healthcare professionals is the core business. The resources, obstacles and prerequisites of the person are identified and used to write a health plan together. In the Netherlands, this paradigm is not used as much even though there are many forms of care here that meet the definition.

My motivation to join Hanna and colleagues in Sweden was that they have extensive experience with economic evaluations of person-centered care. In the Netherlands, we have certain care pathways and trajectories that classify as person-centered care but are not framed or evaluated as such, including the intervention central to my own PhD-project. I was very curious to see what elements could be transferrable and what preconditions are needed to do so. In addition, I really wanted to understand what the approach of PCC was and how this contributes to better outcomes.

During my stay, I joined a project on the evaluation of an RCT where PCC was used as intervention in a population of patients who were dealing with common mental disorders. Areas of special interest were absenteeism at work and self-efficacy in patients. Due to the



registration data that is widely available in Sweden, it is possible to quite extensively measure healthcare use and work-related outcomes (e.g. absenteeism) without the bias that comes with self-reported data. This made this project a very good and clear example for me, and it helped with understanding the methods, the intervention, and the effects on the population.

Due to the extensive grant I was able to join the research group for a period of 8 weeks. I think this



really contributed to getting to know my colleagues and their methods. Apart from getting to know all of the specifics, I was curious to see and meet a different research culture and to get to know researchers in the same field, but different context. I really have benefitted so much of this, in my personal growth and in my development as researcher. It has helped me to get some distance from my own project and gave me the opportunity to critically reflect on my own practice. Besides that, it really helps to be able to join regular (PhD) meetings and seminars, which is usually not possible if you can only stay for a week or two. I joined several seminars on different topics, varying from health economics to intercultural palliative care. I even got to join the two-day annual meeting of the GPCC, in which researchers, patients, relatives of patients, actors, and other people came together to discuss the narratives of patients, and the future of GPCC. Of course you can't write about Sweden and forget the *fika*: the social activity to have a break with coffee and something delicious like a cinnamon bun. I miss it dearly!

Gothenburg is a wonderful city and the University can be found everywhere. With 530000 students, there are several campuses and faculties all over the city. They are focused on the international aspect as well, and very welcoming towards visiting researchers and students. They even have some housing available which you can rent for affordable prices if you're a visiting researcher. I have felt very welcome!

Of course it has not been all work, and getting to know the Swedes, their culture and their strikingly beautiful country was great. Being outside and being in nature is a very important part of this. Gothenburg is an archipelago and it is very easy to visit one of the many islands on the Swedish west-coast. The same ticket you use for tram and bus is used on the ferries and within an hour you can be hiking along giant boulders, pine forests with mushrooms, and watch the sheep graze at the seaside. It really is something else to be among fairy-tale like woods and meadows, and enjoy some *fika* as well! 10/10 would recommend Sweden for researchers with a sweet tooth 😊

I'd like to give my appreciation and thanks to APH for this great opportunity!

