

Obituary

Luke van Putten



On 7 December 1989, Luke van Putten died of a heart disease that had crippled him increasingly during recent years.

His contributions to cancer research began after he joined the staff of the very new Radiobiological Institute TNO in 1956. By then he had completed his medical studies and his training in internal medicine and had also gained his PhD degree at Leyden University. In-depth study of diseases and the development of new treatment methods held more attraction for him than clinical work as a physician. He soon started a variety of research projects involving radiation carcinogenesis, experimental radiotherapy and experimental bone marrow transplantation.

In the early seventies Luke became interested in the newly emerging anti-cancer chemotherapy. He was a

pioneer in the study of combination treatment of tumors with radiation and chemotherapeutic agents and promoted the introduction of chemotherapy into oncological practice in The Netherlands.

Following his return from a sabbatical year with Henry Kaplan and Bob Kallman in Stanford in 1965, he joined the Groupe Européenne de Chimiothérapie Anticancéreuse (GECA), which was later to become the EORTC. Luke served the EORTC for more than 20 years, first as a Councillor and later as a member of its Administrative Board and as its Treasurer. In that capacity he assisted Henry Tagnon in initiating an essential source of funding for EORTC by way of the EORTC Foundation. These important administrative duties were only a minor part of his activities in EORTC. He worked on many of its subcommittees, most notably the Screening and Pharmacology Group, and the Protocol Review Committee.

For nearly 25 years Luke van Putten held the post of Associate Director of the Radiobiological Institute TNO, and helped to build up its international reputation. Luke van Putten was a gifted teacher because of his exceptional memory and the enthusiasm with which he explained his ideas. In 1970 he was appointed to the Chair of Applied Radiation Biology at Leyden University. His broad knowledge of radiation biology and radiation protection made him the member for Health Aspects on the National Committee that organized and directed the Public Debate on Nuclear Energy during 1981 and 1982. In recognition of his outstanding services to the country and society he was awarded the distinction of Officer in the Order of Orange Nassau.

Luke served on many committees and editorial boards, including the editorial board of this Journal. He will be remembered with friendship and gratitude by many of his students and colleagues all over the world. He is survived by his wife Marijke and his daughter and four sons. We share their deep sorrow.

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