

At least a million Dutch people suffer from a lung disorder. Treatment and nursing cost our country an annual two billion euros. That is four per cent of all medical costs in the Netherlands. Much more important than the financial aspect, however, is the personal suffering that lung disease causes patients and their families. These disorders severely restrict everyday life, and in the worst cases they can be fatal. And these are only the Dutch statistics. If we look at the figures on a European and world scale, they are even more staggering. After all, lung disease does not care about national borders.

That is why it is an excellent idea to bring the top researchers from around the world together in one place. The WASOG/BAL conference is of enormous importance in the fight against lung disease. I cannot emphasise enough that the conference organisers and participants deserve maximum support, not only from policy-makers and politicians, but also from financing bodies and sponsors. It is also an excellent idea to organise this conference in Maastricht. That is not because it helps boost conference tourism here – that is of indirect significance. Much more important is that Maastricht University has a chair in interstitial lung disease and Maastricht is the home of the ild care foundation. This organisation encourages advanced research into lung disease and is active in the field of prevention. It is responsible for creating the right academic climate for this conference.

There is also the fact that Maastricht is developing into an international centre for health, care and cure – another reason why a conference such as WASOG/BAL belongs here.

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