



# Keys to a healthy society: from policy to action

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ASSOCIATION GÉNÉRALE DE L'INDUSTRIE DU MÉDICAMENT  
ALGEMENE VERENIGING VAN DE GENEESMIDDELENINDUSTRIE



# AGENDA

1. **Welcome by Frédéric Clais**
2. Keynote speech by Prof. Frank Vandembroucke
3. Keynote speech by Dr. Sam Proesmans
4. Closing by Caroline Ven



# Welcome

SPEAKER

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# Frédéric Clais

CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF  
PHARMA.BE



# Keynote speech

SPEAKER

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## Prof. Frank Vandembroucke

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC HEALTH ON THE  
PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING LEGISLATIVE TERM  
AND THE ROLE THAT MEDICINES AND VACCINES  
PLAY IN POLICY



# Keynote speech

SPEAKER

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## Dr. Sam Proesmans

EMERGENCY PHYSICIAN, DEPT.  
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER AT ZAS  
& AUTHOR

# What does it matter?

How your behavior makes everyone healthier





## ‘Na 13 jaar ben ik van plan om de geneeskunde vaarwel te zeggen. Ik wil geen dokter meer zijn’

**Sam Proesmans**

Spoedarts en specialist public health • 12-04-2010, 02:41 • Bijgewerkt op: 03-09-2021, 07:32 •

Deel dit  
artikel:

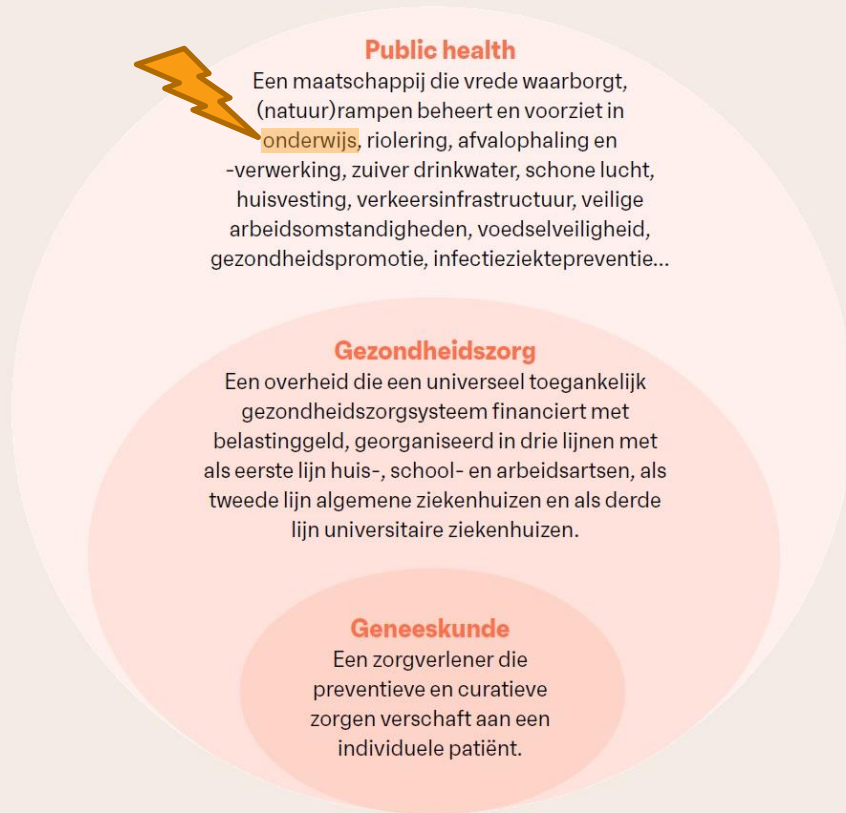


**D**okter Sam Proesmans van de Vrijdaggroep neemt afscheid van de geneeskunde, maar niet van de patiënt.

Bijna 13 jaar geleden zat ik samen met 5.000 anderen in een koude hangar in de buurt van Brussel. De hangar stond tussen mij en mijn toekomst als dokter, wat ik al had beslist te worden toen ik vier jaar oud was. Na een klein horde te hebben gemist, nam ik twee maanden later voor een tweede keer deel aan het ingangsexamen, om dit keer in een nog killere Brusselse hangar mijn kans niet te laten schieten. Enkele weken later startte ik mijn studies geneeskunde.

**What  
does it  
matter?**

# WDIM? led me to *Public Health*



In the past century, we live 30 years longer.

25 of those - 85%! - are due to *Public Health*.

# Public health OR Medicine? False choice



*[...] the approaches and achievements of public health and clinical medicine are often unhelpfully framed as dichotomies — “prevention versus cure” or “individual versus population health.”*

*But increasingly, public health professionals understand that the two fields are complementary, if only because we or our loved ones have all been patients hanging on the words of a physician after the presentation of a disease that was not prevented.*



# Part 1: My health is your health

01

My (individual) health

02

Our (collective) health

03

Planetary health

# Part 2: Thank God for science

04

Association is  
not causation

05

Multifactorial is  
the new normal

06

Real or fake news?

# Part 1: My health is your health





01

**My  
(individual)  
health**

# Vital Four = Pareto prevention



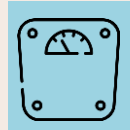
**don't smoke**



**exercise 30'/day**



**eat healthy\***



**BMI < 30**

Just 4 behavioral factors reduce risk of the most frequent and deadliest chronic diseases (heart disease, diabetes and cancer) by 80%, which will help you live as much as 14 years longer.

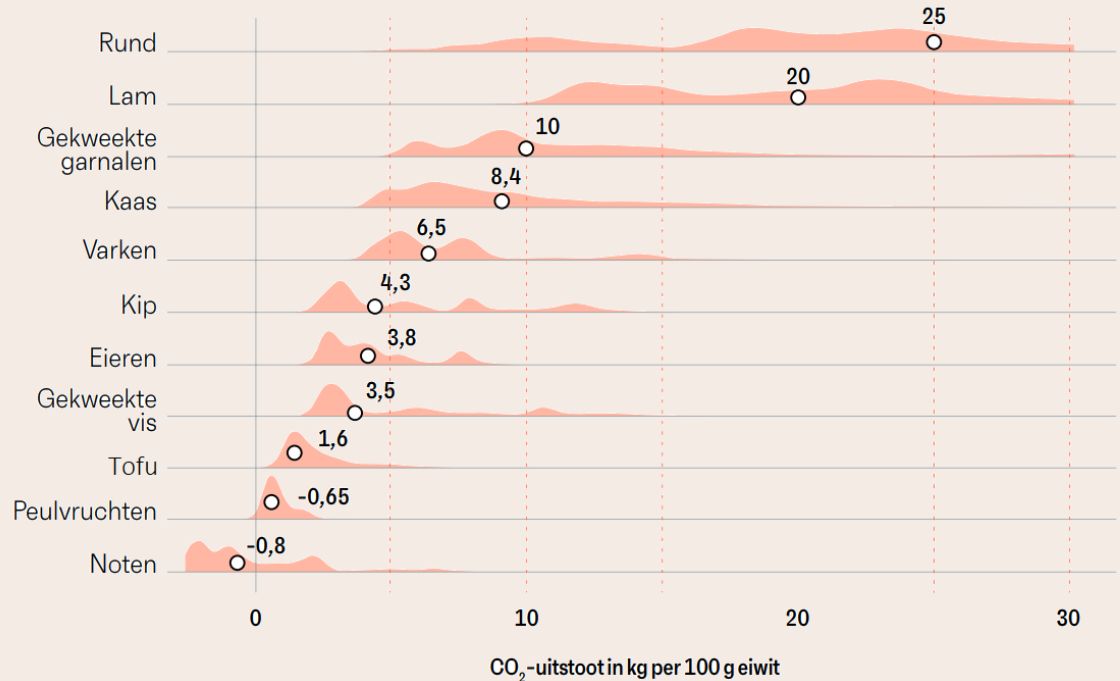
I.e. maniacally engaging in remaining energy- and time-consuming 20%, does not pay off.

\*5 principles

# Principle 1: mostly plant-based

Ecologically **most impactful** plant foods have a smaller carbon footprint than the ecologically **least impactful** animal foods.

De CO<sub>2</sub>-voetafdruk van verschillende voedingsmiddelen  
(gebaseerd op Our World in Data, 2023)



# Principe 2: not too processed

Refrigerator and storage methods such as vitamin C as a preservative are among the greatest public health inventions ever, as they save us from liver and stomach cancer and cardiovascular disease.

However, food processing and preservation has been overdone: last 25-30 years also artificial colorings, flavorings and preservatives (= **ultra-processed**), in addition to salt, sugar and fat (= **processed**).

Why? Consumption (= sales)↑, which makes evolutionary sense, since our bodies are rewarded for the intake of salt (60% body weight) and sugar/fat (winter reserve) by endorphin release in the brain.

# Principle 3: not too much and not too often



Not too much: **1/3 food worldwide is thrown away = 10% CO<sub>2</sub>-production(!)**



Not too often: ***'There is nothing magical about breakfast.'***

Even more so, if you skip your breakfast then you are doing intermittent fasting.

- Weight loss
- Less oxidative stress
- More efficient glucose regulation
- Suppression of inflammatory responses

} Slow down aging

# Principle 4: not too fat

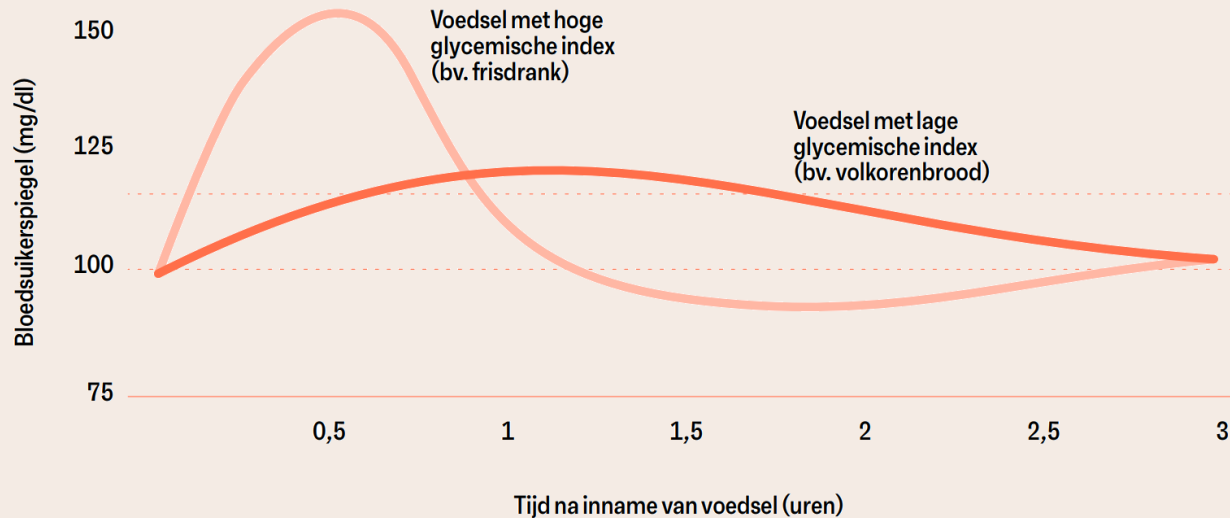
**1 mmol/L** (40 mg/dL) rise above 2.5 mmol/l (100 mg/dl), leads annually to 1.5% increased risk of cardiovascular disease if you have never experienced a brain or heart attack and 5% if you have already survived a brain or heart attack.



## **Inuit-myth:**

A diet extremely rich in animal fats and yet low cardiovascular mortality - due to omega 3 or not? On the contrary, cardiovascular mortality dropped from 1960, along with the introduction of cupcakes into their diet.

# Principle 5: not too sweet



**Zero-sugar** not a good alternative because they decrease sweetness sensation, resulting in greater cravings for sweet (i.e., sugar).



02

# Our (collective) health

# Individual behavior with collective impact



**Vaccination**



**Bicycle helmets**



**Antibiotics**



**Smoking**

Collective impact through **externality** (= effect on uninvolved 3rd party):

- Vaccination: negative for individual, but positive for population
- Bicycle helmets: positive for individual, but negative for population
- Antibiotics: positive for individual, but negative for population
- Smoking: negative for individual, but negative for population

# Externality > policy > freedom ↓ > resistance

Externality is a reason for government intervention, i.e. policymaking.

Good public health **policy** strives to keep as many people as healthy as possible. Sometimes, however, that aim entails a restriction of individual freedom\* or a, leading to **resistance** to public health.

But, '**your freedom ends where someone else's begins**', zei John Stuart Mill (1859).

Besides, resistance is often of (relatively) limited duration, once everyone understands that the benefits to the public - and thus one's own - health outweigh the costs of the individual restriction of freedom. E.g. smoking at bars, seat belt requirements....

→ **Does the same apply to climate goals?!**



03

# Planetary health

# Climate change biggest *public health* crisis AND opportunity of 21st century

‘

We must see human health integrated with that of our planet if we are to secure the health of our future generation.

Unfortunately, it is too late for **primary** prevention, but not for **secondary** and **tertiary** prevention.

# Prevention triptych



## Primary prevention

**Preventing** a of not yet existing **disease**

Too late, the disease climate change is no longer preventable  
Caveat: Continuous fever of 41°C is not livable!



## Secondary prevention

**Early detection** of an existing but undiagnosed **disease**  
(= screening)

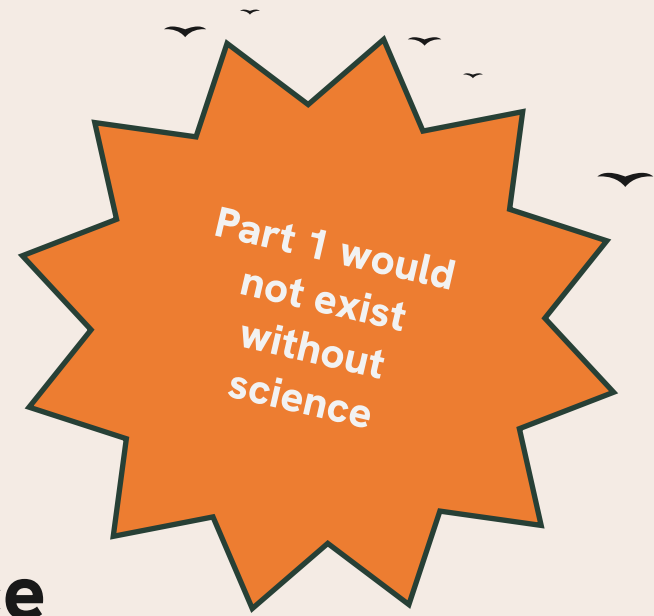
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible, i.e. mitigation  
e.g. eat less red meat



## Tertiary prevention

**Preventing complications** of existing and already diagnosed disease

Even if mitigation is successful, the consequences will be disastrous, which is why we also need to focus heavily on adaptation  
e.g. more green/blue, more space for nature



## Part 2: Thank God for science

**04**

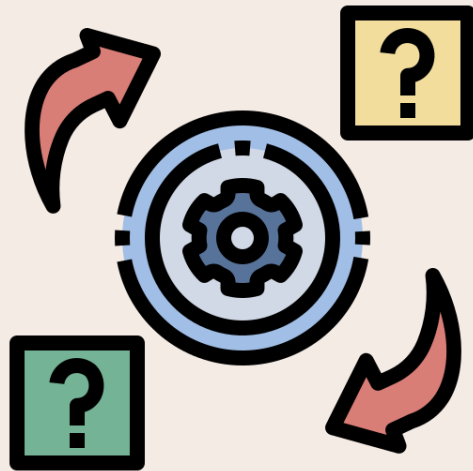
**Association is  
not causation**

**05**

**Multifactorial is  
the new normal**

**06**

**Real or fake news?**



04

**Association is  
not causation**

‘

*'My 16-year-old daughter has had heart problems from her **Pfizer vaccines**, my brother-in-law has had tinnitus after his **Modernabooster**, and my plus-brother went into a coma after his first **Pfizer vaccine**. In other words, we have since become terrified of covid vaccination.'*

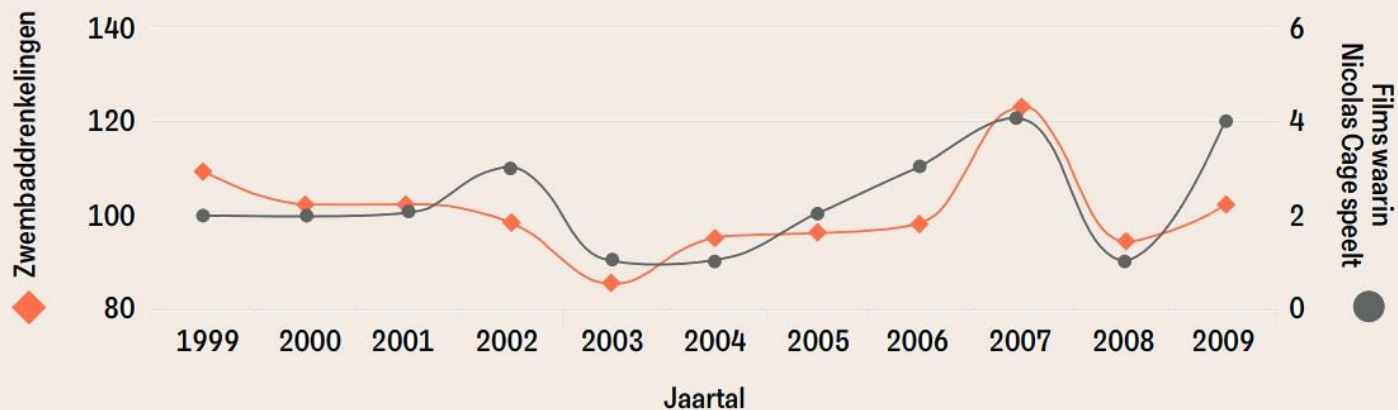
*"My 16-year-old daughter suffered heart problems from drinking a **glass of sparkling water**, my brother-in-law tinnitus after eating a **pizza margherita**, and my plus-brother went into a coma after his first ride on his new **electric bike**. In other words, we have since become terrified of life.'*

**Just as vaccination is not the cause of those diseases, coffee is not the cause of lung cancer**



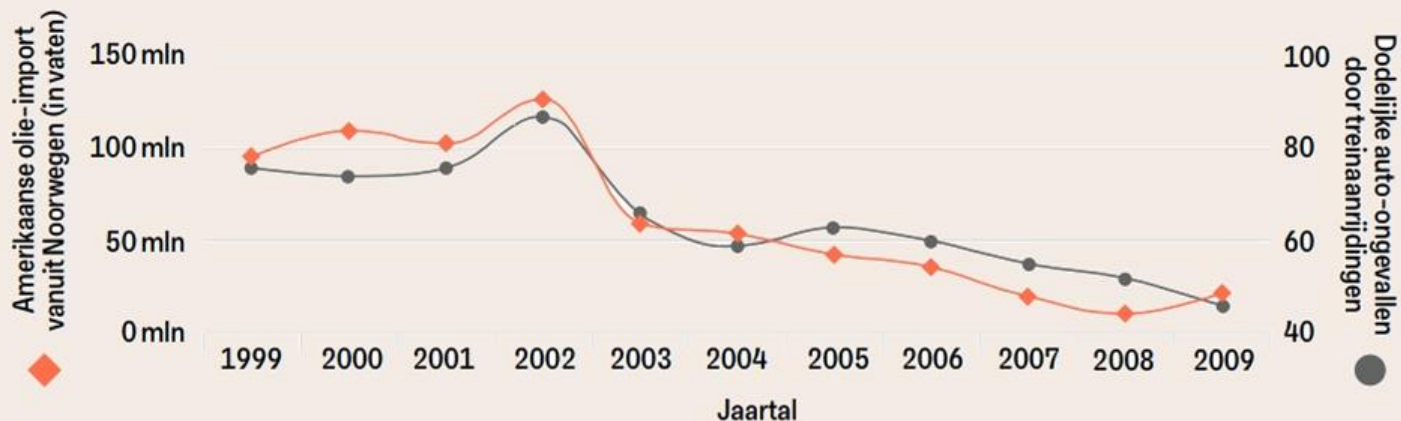
## Aantal mensen die in een zwembad verdrinken is geassocieerd met het aantal films waarin Nicolas Cage speelt

(naar Vigen, 2013 op basis van Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) en Internet Movie Database (IMDB), 2013)



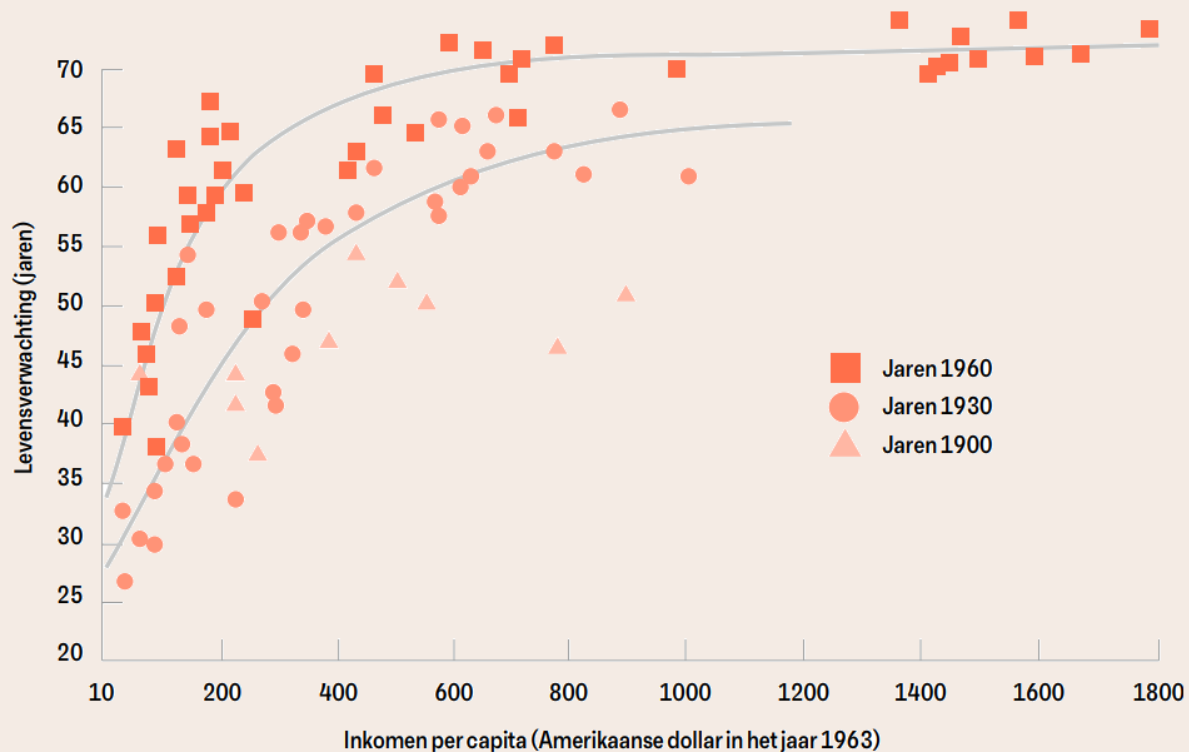
## Aantal vaten olie dat de Verenigde Staten importeert vanuit Noorwegen is geassocieerd met het aantal automobilisten dat sterft door aanrijding door een trein

(naar Vigen, 2013 op basis van Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) en Department of Energy 2013)

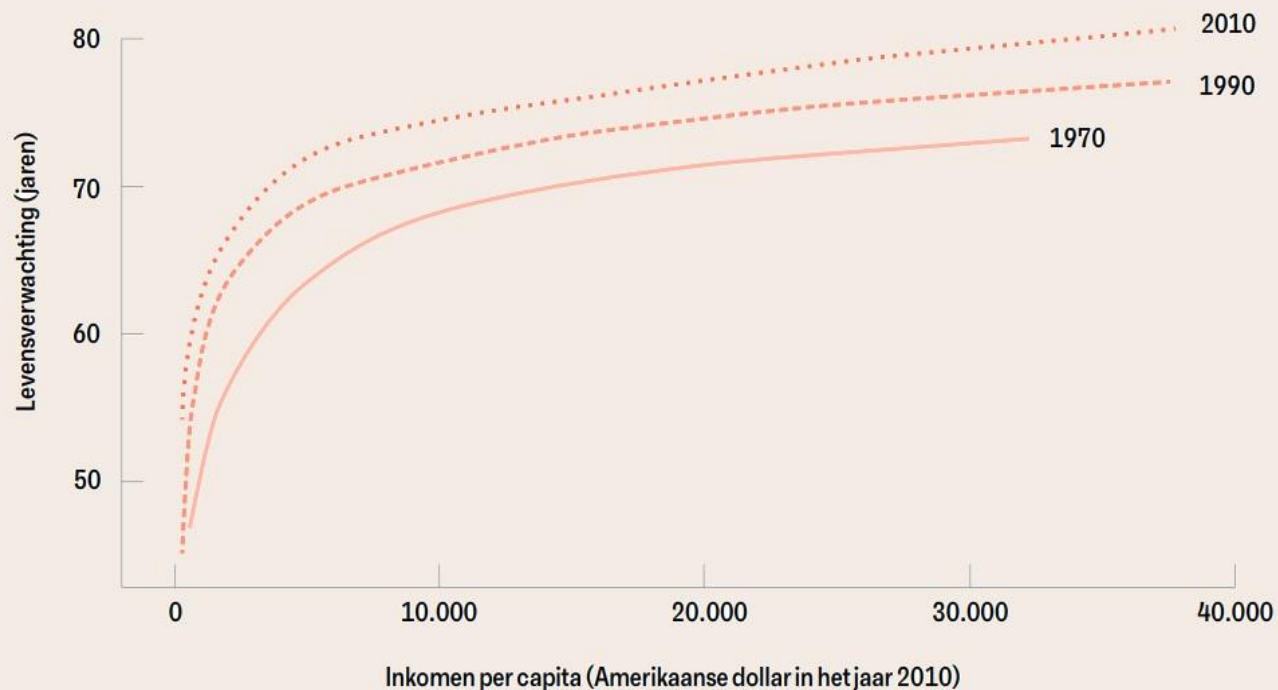


## Prestoncurve: relatie tussen levensverwachting bij geboorte en inkomen per capita in de jaren 1900, de jaren 1930 en de jaren 1960

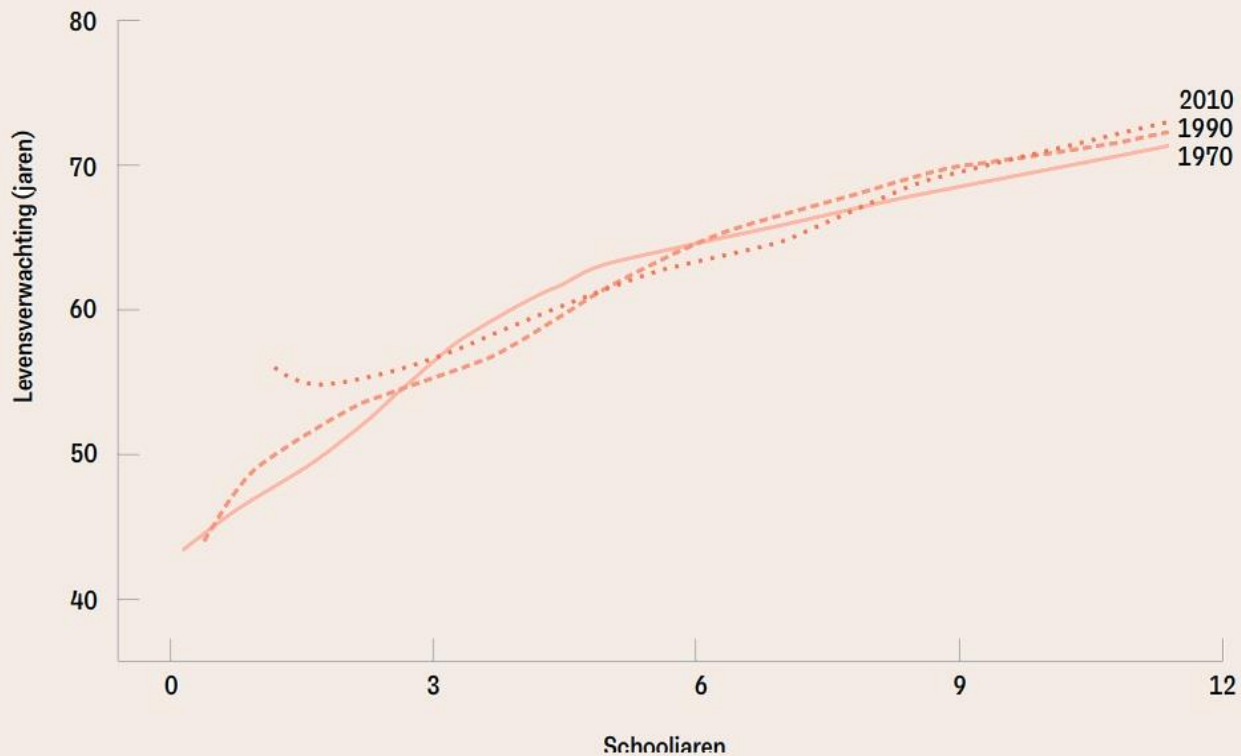
(gebaseerd op Lutz et al. 2018)



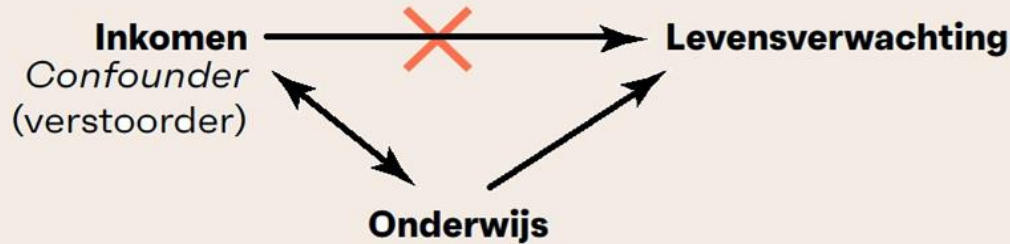
## Relatie tussen levensverwachting bij geboorte en inkomen per capita (gebaseerd op Lutz en Kebede, 2018)



## Relatie tussen levensverwachting bij geboorte en aantal schooljaren (gebaseerd op Lutz en Kebede, 2018)



# Not 'the richer, the healthier', but 'the wiser, the healthier'

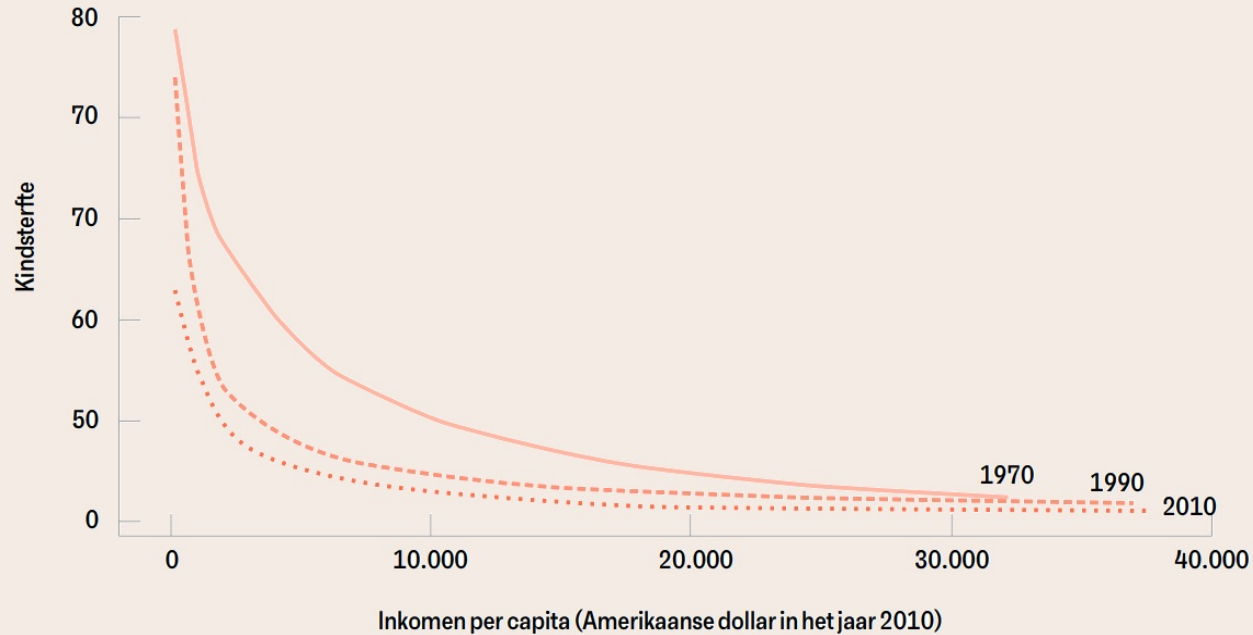


Education literally changes the **neural connections in your brain**: by school year, IQ +1-5.

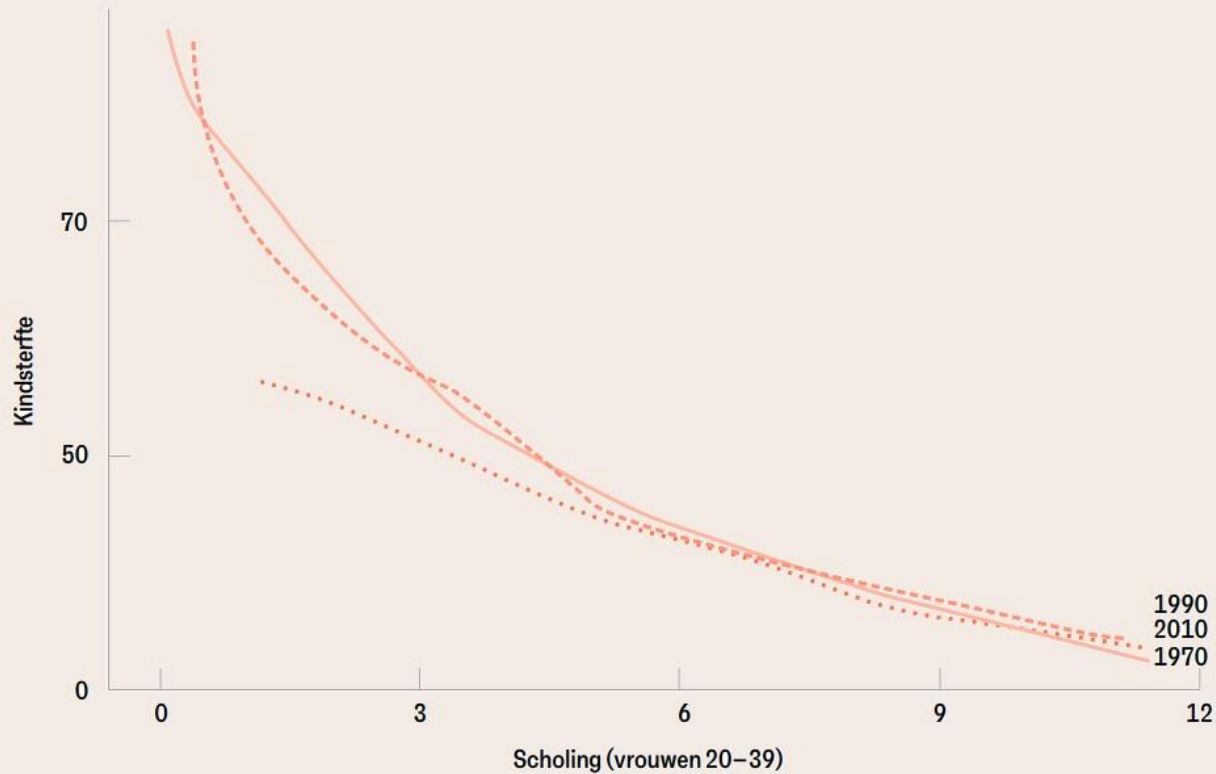
The higher the education rate, the more attention to prevention and the more **care-seeking behavior**.

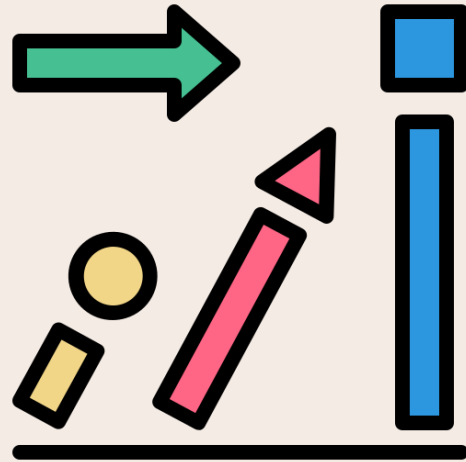
Education is the **key to a healthy life AND society**.

## Relatie tussen kindsterfte en inkomen per capita (gebaseerd op Lutz en Kebede, 2018)



## Relatie tussen kindsterfte en aantal schooljaren\* (gebaseerd op Lutz en Kebede, 2018)





05

**Multifactorial  
is the new  
normal**

# If there is causation at all, it is rarely unifactorial



# As was the case with Titanic



1. **Meteorological:** warmer than normal, resulting in more icebergs



2. **Astronomical:** exceptionally high spring tide, pushing more icebergs toward shipping lane



3. **Anthropological:** much too fast course (40km/h)



4. **Technical:** bolts of inferior steel jumped like champagne corks



5. **Legal:** too few lifeboats, because legal requirement at the time was only 1/3



# Multifactorially reduced to 3 groups of factors, in which *'nurture trumps nature'*

1. **Genes**
2. **Environment**
3. **Behavior** (vital four!)
4. **Bad luck**

**Epigenetics** is the missing link between these 3 and explains down to the cellular level\* why your **zip code determines your health more than your genetic code.**

\*Stressors such as smoking, air pollution, famine, racism, poverty... lead to an increase in *allostatic load* that causes on-switching of genes by methylation.



06

**Real or fake  
news?**

# What is the definition of science?

Science seeks to **provide answers** to the world around us, our environment, to what we see, hear, feel, smell and taste.

This search for explanations about the things of life has one constant: **advancing insight**. Insights are constantly being adjusted and sometimes even changed 180°.

This constant change and uncertainty about surrounding phenomena is **uncomfortable** for many people. People have a natural need for stability and certainty—something firm to stand on—and **religion** often fulfills that role.

Yet it is precisely this uncertainty, critical reflection and constant adjustment and learning that is the **beauty and strength** of science.

# Who can I trust?

## Stap 0. Did someone else do a fact check?

ex. Gezondheid & Wetenschap, Snoopes

## Stap 1. Where did you read it?

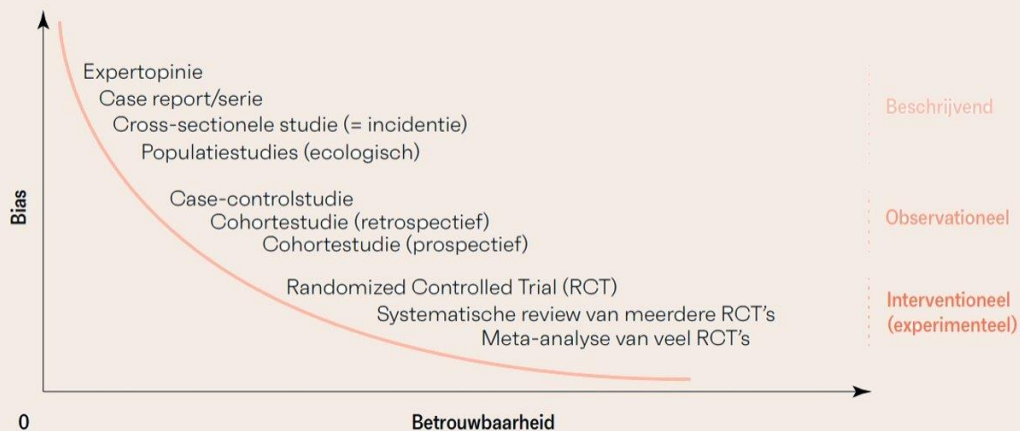
ex. Nature vs. predatory journal

## Stap 2. What kind of study is it?

ex. Dierproef extrapolatie

## Stap 3. Who wrote it?

ex. Linus Pauling



# Closing remarks

Individual actions can be, and often are, a powerful catalyst: one person spurs others on, you get leverage, possibly even a **snowball effect**, that leads to the final result being far greater than any one individual could ever do. But someone has to take the first step. That's where you can make a difference.

A strong public health system, anchored in a society where the shortcomings of public health and the victims of brutal misfortune are taken care of by a high-performing health care system (the essentials for health care providers!), is a **basic prerequisite for a successful society**.



## Want to read more (NL)?





## Closing

SPEAKER

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**Caroline  
Ven**

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