

Title: Bridging science, practice and education in mental care for older adults: case studies from six Dutch Living Labs in Ageing and Long-Term Care”

Introduction In long-term care, the gap between research, practice and education remains persistent. Dutch Living Labs in Ageing and Long-Term Care, which exist over 20 years, address this challenge through long-term, structural collaborations between universities, care providers and educational institutes. A key mechanism of these living labs is the use of boundary-spanning roles—often referred to as knowledge brokers, science practitioners, or linking pins. Depending on the Living Lab, these roles are fulfilled either by researchers embedded in practice or education, or by practitioners who receive dedicated time to engage in research and innovation. Despite differences in terminology and setup, their shared purpose is to connect research, practice, education and policy to stimulate continuous learning and evidence-informed improvement. Other defining features of Dutch living labs include co-creation of research, active stakeholder engagement, and structured communication and valorisation strategies. This symposium presents six mental care for older adults-focused case studies, one from each Dutch living lab, to illustrate how these core mechanisms operate in practice. Each case highlights how boundary-spanning work, co-creation with clients and families, stakeholder collaboration, educational integration or valorisation activities support innovation and implementation in mental care. Collectively, the cases demonstrate how living labs create the structural and relational conditions needed to embed research within care organisations and generate practice-relevant impact.’

Objective: To demonstrate how Dutch living lab structures support the integration of science, practice and education in mental care for older adults, and to provide transferable lessons for international contexts.

Methods: A multiple case-study approach across six Dutch living labs. Each case describes the mental care-related challenge addressed, the living-lab mechanisms employed (e.g., boundary spanners, stakeholder collaboration, co-creation), and early outcomes.

Expected Results: Insights into how living-lab elements help reduce the research–practice gap, enable sustained collaboration and enable intermediate impact on care, learning and innovation.

Conclusion: Dutch Living Labs in Ageing and Long-Term Care demonstrate a model for embedding research in practice and education. The six cases focused on long-term care for older adults offer concrete, internationally relevant lessons for organisations aiming to develop or strengthen living labs in long-term care.

Per deelaabstract

Title: Enhancing care for older persons in nursing homes: Bridging universities and long-term care facilities by positioning linking pins.

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Introduction

In the Netherlands academic networks for long-term care are established to enhance the care for older people with or without dementia who are depending on long-term care (LTC) or geriatric rehabilitation (GR). Academic networks, such as AWO-Limburg and the University Network for the Care sector South Holland (UNC-ZH), are partnerships between universities and nursing homes utilising scientific research to enhance the care for older people in LTC and GR in the Netherlands.

Within AWO-Limburg and UNC-ZH, linking pins are positioned to work as a liaison between the two worlds: universities and nursing homes. Linking pins are persons either from the university, the so-called scientific linking pins, or from the nursing homes, called practice-based linking pins.

Linking pins are persons who have the ability to communicate within both settings. Besides, they have their own network within an academic network, which facilitates the collaboration and herewith the opportunity to apply scientific research to enhance the care for older people with or without dementia.

Objective

The aim of this project is to provide facilitators and barriers by using linking pins in the infrastructure of academic networks to enhance the opportunity to apply scientific research for better care for older persons in LTC and GR. Furthermore, showing the necessity of well-coordinated collaboration in an academic network.

Methods

Qualitative studies using interviews with scientific and practice-based linking pins in academic networks for LTC in the Netherlands.

Results

Early findings show the importance of a well-designed organisational structure, with clear communication processes and a methodical approach.

Conclusion

Clear and well-coordinated organisational processes enhance the ability of linking pins to bridge universities and nursing homes to optimise the possibility of applying scientific research to enhance the care for older persons in LTC and GR.

