

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN

THE WORLD WIDE HEALTH VALLEY

South Limburg, which lies in the heart of the Euroregion and has three major university hospitals within a radius of 30 kilometres, is the ideal location for a Healthcare Hub. By linking up the existing medical infrastructure and available expertise, healthcare facilities in South Limburg, particularly in and around Valkenburg aan de Geul, will be able to develop into a centre of excellence for healthcare on a global scale.

The Healthcare Hub is part of the Acceleration Agenda which is focused particularly on healthcare & cures. Guy Peeters (Maastricht University Hospital) and Guus Broos (healthcare organisation Orbis) are sure of one thing: medical care is not confined by national borders. Peeters: 'In ten years' time, it will be par for the course for patients to cross international borders to receive healthcare.' What we have to do now is to show what Limburg has to offer in this field.'

Health Valley Limburg must become a famous brand in Europe, said Guy Peeters (board chairman Maastricht University Hospital) and Guus Broos (management board of Orbis). Healthcare offers great prospects for the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion. 'It is the new, knowledge-driven industry.'

HEALTH VALLEY LIMBURG

The landscape for healthcare & cure is likely to have changed beyond recognition in this region in ten years' time. By that stage the University of Maastricht (UM) may well have entered into a strategic alliance with the universities of Liège, Hasselt and Leuven, and become the leading university for medical sciences. This applies equally to the three university hospitals in Maastricht, Aachen and Liège. In about ten years' time, not only will they have joined forces, they will also have merged. The Klinikum in Aachen and University Hospital Maastricht will play a pioneering role. And the healthcare organisation Orbis in Sittard-Geleen (which initiated 'medical tourism' in South Limburg) and the Atrium hospitals in Parkstad Limburg will by then probably have formed strategic alliances. Guus Broos: 'This concentration of medical technology will create an epicentre of healthcare. The mobility of patients within the Euroregion will become the norm.'

And in the view of Guy Peeters, this is already an established fact. 'In ten years' time, it will be a matter of course for patients to go over the border for medical care.' This, in his opinion, is not only related to the fact that patients are better informed, but also to do with technological progress. 'The Netherlands currently has a few million patients, but soon our country will have 16 million medical customers. This is because we are better at predicting diseases and taking better action to prevent them from occurring. Preventative healthcare is not just about patients, but about everyone.'

In November 2006, Guy Peeters gave a presentation about the future of healthcare during a working visit to Limburg by Karien van Gennip, Minister of Foreign Trade. Peeters does not fully believe in a single European healthcare market. He sees more scope in bilateral agreements. The University Hospital Maastricht and the Klinikum in Aachen are currently setting up a Center of Excellence to provide top quality healthcare and scientific research. Peeters revealed recently in the NRC Handelsblad newspaper that the university hospital in Liège will also join them.

EUROPEAN HEALTHCARE MARKET

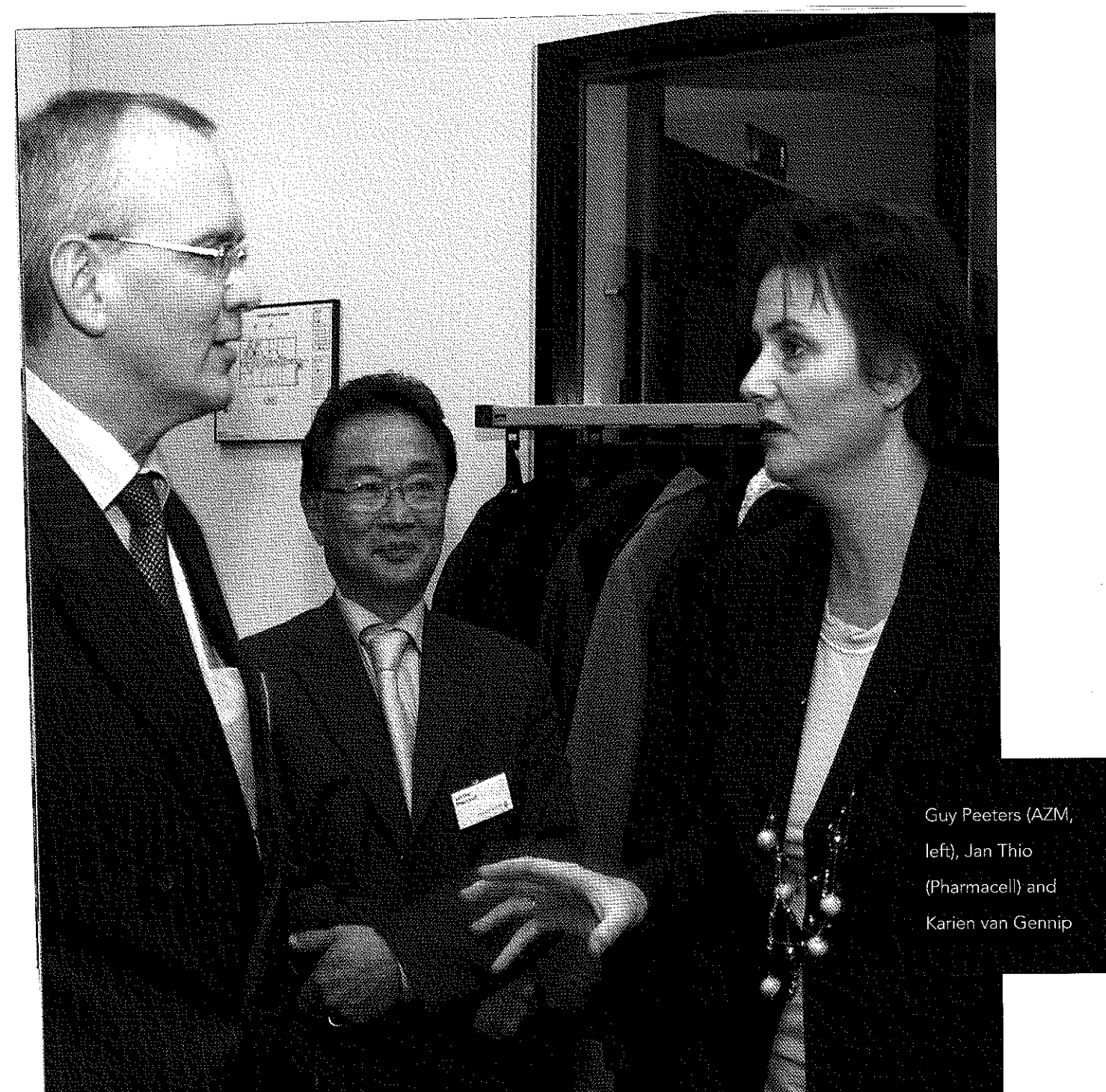
The Centre of Excellence wants to draw patients from all over Europe for very complicated medical treatments. Peeters added: 'It is of vital importance that we remain at the frontline of medicine. You have to join forces to achieve that.' The level of cooperation between hospitals in the Euroregion is becoming more intensive, said Guus Broos of Orbis. 'The hospitals in Sittard (Orbis), Heerlen (Atrium) and Maastricht (AZM) are now working together in the purchasing area and in certain fields of healthcare. This is a giant step forward. We are now busy expanding this cooperation.'

THE CONCEPT

Healthcare has become synonymous with prevention. Periodic health checks, wellness and fitness, sporting activities and culture and gastronomy are natural components. Broos can foresee a future with Limburg and the Euroregion as the beating heart of the World Wide Health Valley, the leading international health region. The region where you can get healthy (top cures & care), remain healthy (prevention & wellness) and enjoy a healthy life (gastronomy & culture).

The concept is: once you have set out a joint and concerted course of action, then you can also accelerate that course (and this brings us immediately to the mission of the Acceleration Agenda). And what applies at the end of 2006 will surely be true in the future: the one who takes the first step will have the first mover's advantage. That, according to Broos and Peeters, is why they are making the first move.

The globalisation of the healthcare industry has turned medical tourism into a growing trend. Patients are able to seek out the healthcare they want, anywhere in the world. The popular medical tourist centres are now located in south-east Asia, and particularly in



Guy Peeters (AZM, left), Jan Thio (Pharmacell) and Karien van Gennip

Singapore, Thailand and India. Tourists can already combine good quality and affordable medical care with a unique holiday at a popular tourist resort. The future liberalisation of healthcare in the Netherlands, starting in 2012, will give South Limburg excellent opportunities to be the first to operate in this niche market. The Healthcare Hub then provides the very best medical treatments and techniques, cost-effective healthcare and new technologies, and therefore the best medical care which is on their doorstep.

A strategic blueprint has been designed for the 2006-2012 period, so that Valkenburg and its environs will

be the first manifestation of this market and will be in a position where they can compete, not so much on cost as on quality. The success of this ambitious plan depends on the development of a number of vital infrastructural components and considerable investments. 'We are working hard on this,' said Martin Eurlings, Minister of Economic Affairs in the Province of Limburg, and chairman of the Task Force of the Acceleration Agenda •

Jos van Wersch



PROFESSOR JOS VAN WERSCH:

CONCERNED ABOUT OUR URBAN ENVIRONMENT

One of Heerlen's most famous residents was the architect H. P. G. Heerlen (1986-1974), and the centre is one of the recently included that same Glass Pavilion. Heerlen expressed his anger about the situation into account. 'It is