

# 'We support a smoke-free generation. DON'T YOU?'

Patients, employees, visitors and students of Amsterdam UMC (VUmc), part of Vrij Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) and Academic Centre for Dentistry (ACTA) are no longer allowed to smoke in and around the hospital and the surrounding buildings ACTA, O2 Lab Building. Botanische Tuin Zuidas also joint this initiative The smoking areas were removed on 1 October. We got together with Eva Laus, project manager at VU Amsterdam, Dyonne Broers, Director of Health at ACTA and Sabine Rummens, Managing Director at ACTA, who hope that businesses in Zuidas will follow their lead and create more smoke-free areas.

## A HEALTHY FUTURE

Smoking is a huge topic of discussion. It is already prohibited on sports clubs and amusement parks and fewer people are addicted to smoking than ever before. However, Amsterdam UMC is very concerned about the fact that, despite all the information available, many people are still lighting up. Everyone should quit. Eva: 'Science has shown that most smokers light their first cigarettes at school. Seeing someone smoke boosts the desire to smoke. Scientists say that this knowledge should be used to underscore the importance of education, because discouraging smoking at an early age has been proven to be effective.' Amsterdam UMC has long since spread the word to its patients, employees and students. Which is why, Eva says: 'We all would like to offer a healthy environment and strongly believe everyone deserves a healthy future.' ACTA could not agree more. Dyonne and Sabine: 'Smoking also causes a lot of oral health problems. What many people don't know is that smoking increases

your chances of getting gum issues and other serious illnesses. In schools and in patient care, the importance of giving up smoking has been emphasized for some time and finding help is offered. This campaign supports us in propagating this vision.'

## FRONTRUNNERS

State Secretary Blokhuis officially opened the smoke-free area around the Amsterdam UMC. If it is up to Blokhuis, the draft legislation on smoke-free school grounds at all educational institutions quickly becomes definitive. All initiators at the table hope that companies and institutions at Zuidas will follow in their footsteps and introduce a smoke-free property; to prevent the problem from simply moving to another spot and to promote the same message together: 'We support a smoke-free generation. Don't you? Who wants to be treated like a pariah when you can be a frontrunner.'

Josja van der Veer, Director of Facility Campus Organization: I am proud of every kid, that does not start smoking or is inspired to stop smoking, before coming of age. The severe long term consequences of smoking cannot be denied and are scientifically supported. I've grown up in an era where smoking during class, while driving and even during maternity visit to celebrate a newborn baby, was widely accepted. From an academic point of view, it's our responsibility to persistently bring forward the facts and arguments in favor of a healthy working and learning environment. We declare VU Campus as a smoke-free space. My drive is to bring forward our approach within the Zuidas Community and work together with Hello Zuidas Members towards a smoke-free Zuidas. As stakeholders in Zuidas Community, we have a civic responsibility to attribute to Sustainable Development.



EVA LAUS, PROJECT MANAGER AT VU AMSTERDAM, SABINE RUMMENS, MANAGING DIRECTOR AT ACTA AND DYONNE BROERS, DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AT ACTA

Jentien Vermeulen (MD, PhD) at Amsterdam UMC and projectleader of smokefree UMC performed research on smoking in people with a serious psychiatric disorder. Jentien: 'We found strong clues to indicate that smoking is a risk-factor for developing psychiatric problems. Especially in this group of patients, it is very important to discourage smoking and treat people who aim to quit. We hope to improve health of all patients, including those who smoke the most. Following the example of the nation-wide 'Stoptober' campaign (the annual event to encourage people to quit smoking) Amsterdam UMC now have decided to piggyback onto this well-known campaign and offer patients, employees and students help to quit now. How? By offering a programme for those who wish to quit smoking. Jentien: 'Amsterdam UMC is the largest hospital in our region and sets an example in our city. We work with many other healthcare, education and academic institutions and this is one way for us to lead by example. We see that announcing a smoke-free site is a major incentive to quit smoking, many employees have already signed up for the support options we offer as an employer. Some have already quit on their own or with help from their general practitioner.'

