

Brains in De Koog

Last week over a hundred young researchers came together on the Dutch island of Texel for the so called OIO Retreat. Apart from seals, sheep, beer tasting events and walks on the beach these three days gave them many opportunities to share their knowledge together and for making new friends.

(by: Bart de Haas)

Exciting sessions

On Wednesday the 14th of October two buses left Amsterdam, both on their way to Den Helder. There the whole group would come together to take the boat to Texel. Those buses were filled with graduate students from the oncology departments of NKI, most of them, the VUmc and the AMC. Inside the bus you could already hear the first discussions: everybody was ready for it.

The location for this happening was hotel Opduin, a hotel in De Koog, from which you had a beautiful view over the dunes. In these dunes the traditional group picture was taken. According to NKI-supervisor Titia Sixma it would have been even more fun if the whole group should fall down during the photograph.

After the pictures Sixma opened the plenary sessions. These sessions, divided into fundamental and clinical ones, were 12 minute talks, followed by questions and a short discussion. This was the best way for sharing ideas and helping each other. Also the PR department was there to give some tricks for communication and contact with the media.



Leisure time

In the evenings the program continued. The first evening for example many young researchers presented their posters. Everybody could ask them about their research, while having a good glass of beer from Texel (made after a traditional German recipe!). After the poster presentations many graduate students went to the local pub. And indeed, the next morning breakfast came much too early.

Even after a short night everybody kept on being very enthusiastic about their research. If all those project will continue to be like this, in some years we will have much more knowledge about cancer cells and the working of medicines. By the way, the presentations were also full of inspiration. Some people even talked about proteins wearing a jacket or cholesterol as 'cellular TomTom©'.

The local villagers who saw them in the afternoon cycling, shopping or tasting beer, will never know how many brains had come to their island. Only the people who were there on Friday afternoon, when the bus brought them back to the hospital terrain, could see that they were real scientists: they just had to pop in to check their cells...