

## The Fifth International Heelsum Workshop 'more synergy between primary care and public health': mission statement

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The theme of the Heelsum Workshops is nutrition and dietary patterns as determinants of individual and public health. The meetings thus find themselves on the turning point between public health and individual health care—a crucial turning point from a public health point of view. 'Nutrition' has always contributed to the population's health status in both a positive (raised life expectancy) and negative way (welfare diseases). In individual health care, however, nutrition seems to play second fiddle at best in treatment while it plays a role in prevention and treatment of the most prevalent chronic diseases and disorders. This was an important conclusion drawn at the end of the first Heelsum workshop in 1995. Subsequent meetings focused on strengthening the turning point of public health and primary care from that perspective: nutrition does matter! This is a challenge that cannot be faced with one single innovation—public health and individual health care have developed independently from each other for too long a time, and nutrition is a complex of chemistry, culture and behaviour. Heelsum successfully entered into the dialogue between collective and individual care and continued doing so in 2007. An evident indicator of its success is the

realization of an own position for nutrition counselling in the Cochrane Collaboration, the international collaboration established to analyze and publish the scientific state-of-the-art of medical interventions. Prof. Jaap van Binsbergen, who might be viewed as the personification of the nutrition mission in general practice, has shaped by now a permanent position for this 'field'. There cannot be Cochrane reviews without scientific studies that can be analyzed systematically. A second attainment is stimulation of new research, and a third one the notion that collective and individual interventions should be offered coherently. For example, patients with (imminent) overweight will be more readily inclined to adjust their dietary pattern in a social environment with positive loadings for physical exercise and a healthy diet. This leads us automatically to the programme of 'Heelsum V': an overview of current studies, stimulation of further collective/individual coherence in policy and innovations and progress on the Cochrane forefront with, as a new programme, the options for rendering tested dietary interventions in (general) practice 'nutrition specific'. This is a new shoot of the Heelsum tree; its results are available as this supplement to *Family Practice*.

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