

The Netherlands Society of Neurology

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D. van der Most van Spijk

The following review of a number of historical developments that preceded the birth of the Netherlands Society of Neurology on January will be helpful in gaining a clear understanding of the current organisation of the specialism of neurology. Its predecessor was the Netherlands Society of Psychiatry and Neurology, and in particular the Chamber of Neurology, which, together with the Chamber of Psychiatry, constituted the aforementioned Netherlands Society. Following the division (in) into chambers, the board of the overall society was referred to as 'the Main Board'. For some time, the undersigned had a seat on the Main Board as representative of the Chamber of Neurology, and was chairman of the new Netherlands Society of Neurology from January for a period of four years. He was in a position to participate in the discussions that culminated in the current organisation, and subsequently to be the first to put it to the test in practice.

It is interesting to identify the role played by psychiatry both in the foundation of the Netherlands Society of Psychiatry and Neurology and in its dissolution into the two separate chambers for psychiatry and neurology. Within the medical world of the first half of the th century, psychiatrists in particular had a need for a form of administrative organisation that would later become known as a society of specialists. There were no specialists in branches of medicine up to around . There were, however, physicians with a certain degree of proficiency in surgery, where learning and experience were the determining factors. The state of affairs in the medical field was actually one of chaos in the period after the French domination; the practice of science still left much to be desired. Medicine was practiced only to a very limited extent by *medicinae doctores* from the university, and otherwise by surgeons and so-called rural physicians. It was not always clear how these practitioners acquired their medical knowledge.

Although no element of specialisation emerged in the medical world, a distinction was drawn between illnesses of the body and those of the mind. Those treating illnesses of the mind were considered to form a separate, if not a specialised, group. On the other hand, a start had been made on specialisation in those days, albeit in other countries. The primary example in this regard is Charcot (-), who, as master at the Salpêtrière in Paris, had described countless syndromes: heart, lung and kidney diseases, hysteria, the working of hypnosis, as well as a series of ailments of the central and peripheral nervous systems. Assistants of the 'internist/neurologist' Charcot included, among others, the psychiatrists Freud and Janet. In view of the fact that, in the final analysis, all organ systems are subordinated to the central nervous system, and disorders of this system had been found in a number of mental ill-

nesses, there was an expectation that what could be called neuropsychiatry would grow into one of the first independent specialisms.

In fact, two systems were encountered in the human biological substrate: a biosomatic system with organs for digestion, blood supply and muscle function, all subordinated to and regulated by the nervous system; a system of mental and emotional activities with the faculty of consciousness, all regulated by the nervous system.

Whereas the matters mentioned under were the concern of all medical practitioners, the matters mentioned under were the realm of the doctors for nervous and mental illnesses.

One of the latter was the psychiatrist J. N. Ramaer (-), who succeeded in bringing about the formation of a society of medicine, which was founded in with Ramaer as secretary. This Royal Netherlands Society for the Promotion of Medicine (KNMG), a broad foundation for national public health, embarked on an improvement of medical training. The important point here is that it was a psychiatrist who gave rise to this general institution for all medical practitioners, which says a lot about the position of the psychiatrist in the mid th century.

A number of years later, the same Ramaer took a second initiative with the foundation of a Netherlands Society for Psychiatry. Ramaer took the role of chairman at its foundation in . The objectives of the Society were as follows:

- the promotion of contact between psychiatrists;
- publishing the results of psychiatric research in the Netherlands;
- the dissemination of psychiatric knowledge;
- upholding the interests and rights of Dutch medical practitioners whose primary discipline is psychiatry;
- representing the interests of the insane in the widest sense of the word.

As early as the Society had arranged for the government to enact state supervision on the mental health system. Neurology was included in the title of the society in . This Netherlands Society of Psychiatry and Neurology is the oldest society of specialists in the Netherlands. With respect to the name, it may be stated that there was no clear dividing line between psychiatry and neurology. In fact there was a single discipline of neuropsychiatry. The issue was often one of the anatomy of the central nervous system in relation to certain symptoms of illness.

The first reader in psychiatry () was the true neuro-anatomist Cornelis Winkler (-), who gave his inaugural speech at the Willem Arntsz Huis (an asylum for the insane in Utrecht), under the title: *Psychopathology as Brain Pathology surrounded by the Clinical Sciences*. The first chair of psychiatry in the Netherlands was created almost years later, and was occupied by the aforementioned reader of psychiatry. For an impression of education in psychiatry, take note of what Winkler wrote in his booklet *Recollections of Winkler*. According to Winkler, representatives of a Christian political system in the country had been endeavouring for some time to gain control

of the nursing of the insane. They had founded the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam with a faculty of medicine, originally with only one professor, the psychiatrist L. Bouman (- -). In fact, this professor was the first in the Netherlands to have his own training clinic at his disposal. When later the municipal university opened a psychiatric clinic in the hospital known as the Wilhelminagasthuis, it was a foregone conclusion that the state universities would also have their own training clinics.

The mental institution Endegeest was founded in Leiden as a psychiatric clinic under G. Jelgersma (- -), who accepted his office in - with a speech on psychology and psychopathology. There were but few, said Winkler, to have so many original thoughts regarding the anatomy and physiology of the brain as this gifted psychiatrist Jelgersma. In Winkler's opinion, he and the anatomin L. Bolk (- -)

had achieved immortality through their studies of the cerebellum, whereas Jelgersma's textbook on psychiatry could also be considered as one of the best.

The above clearly shows that in the scientific Netherlands around the turn of the century, there was only one discipline, in which, depending on the researcher, it was possible to distinguish in varying degrees between neuro-anatomy, physiology, psychopathology and sometimes also sociology. Although a clear dividing line between psychiatry and neurology was still absent, certain distinguishing features did start to manifest themselves, which was the reason in - , as we have seen, for the word neurology to be explicitly included in the name of the Society. If we look at the content of scientific lectures and publications we see that neurological and psychiatric subjects both appeared under the heading of psychiatry. It was very common for typically neurological and neurophysiological issues to be the subject of research of a reader in psychiatry such as Winkler, or a professor of psychiatry such as Jelgersma, while the latter, by virtue of his office, actually also wrote a textbook for psychiatry. In other words, it was not a matter of two specialisms, but of a dual specialism, which was concerned with the central and peripheral nervous systems to the extent that they were involved in illnesses of the mind and body. It was the specialism in which the practitioners for nervous and mental illnesses, the neurologists or neurologist-psychiatrists, were trained. A dual specialism it may have been, but it was a dual specialism in motion as a result of a constant differentiation in both the neurological and psychiatric directions. We will present a number of examples typical of this process of development.

Specialists are professionals who set out to know ever more about an ever smaller part of their profession. The expansion of this discipline could be determined by anatomical boundaries: the gastro-intestinal tract, heart, blood, joints, skin, etc.; by the nature of the functional disorder: epilepsy, immunity disorders, endocrine disorders, etc.; by treatment method: vascular surgery, neurosurgery, anaesthesiology, etc.; or by research techniques such as radiology, nuclear medicine, electromyography, laboratory techniques, neuropathology, etc. Ever-smaller parts of the biological research substrate are being subjected to an ever-larger number of diagnostics and therapeutics: this can be seen as the natural progress of specialisation. It goes without saying that, within the framework of this progress, countless scientists outside medical practice would participate in working groups and scientific societies

that arose alongside the professional association of psychiatrists and neurologists.

For instance, a number of scientific societies were founded after the formation of the two departments (psychiatry and neurology), both before and after , with the common objective of being a society in which disciplines other than psychiatry and/or neurology were to have equivalent significance and which would accept other professionals (whether or not specialists) as well as medical practitioners as members. The number of such societies was not inconsiderable, and the list below is by no means complete:

- the Netherlands Epilepsy Society;
- the Netherlands Society of Psychoanalysis
- the Netherlands Society for Psychiatrists in Employment
- the Netherlands Association of Psychoanalysis;
- the Netherlands Society of Medical Sexology;
- the Netherlands Aphasia Foundation;
- the Interdisciplinary Association of Biological Psychiatry;
- the Netherlands Society of Medical Hypnosis;
- the Netherlands Society of Child Neurology;
- the Netherlands Society of EEG and Clinical Neurophysiology;
- the Netherlands Society of Neuropsychology.

Overview

As mentioned above, the Netherlands Society of Psychiatry (), which has been known as the Netherlands Society of Psychiatry and Neurology since , is the oldest academic specialist society in the Netherlands. At various times during its existence, it has undergone minor or major changes in its organisation. Structural changes were brought about not only as the result of pressure from its own members, but also at the instigation of the Royal Netherlands Society for the Promotion of Medicine (KNMG) or the national government. In the first half-century of its existence, the Netherlands Society of Psychiatry and Neurology succeeded in establishing chairs for psychiatry and/or neurology in Dutch universities. saw the creation of a legislative body for all medical specialisms, the Central College for the Admission and Registration of Medical Specialists (CC), which was an organ of the KNMG. The medical faculties, the ministers of education and of health, and a representative of the hospitals were also involved in the decision-making process of the CC. No specialist society whatever is represented in the CC, whereas they are represented in the executive body of the CC, the Specialists Registration Committee (SRC).

Major structural changes were imposed on the Netherlands Society of Psychiatry and Neurology in with the separation of psychiatry and neurology. The two chambers had authority with respect to the promotion of science and educational issues. The Main Board continued to be the central body for all other matters. For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that the Social Committee was found-

ed in (to continue the work of the committee for social affairs that started in), with a chamber for independent neurologists and a chamber for neurologists in employment. This committee was the negotiating body of the society with respect to the socio-economic interests of the members with the National Specialists Society (LSV) and the National Society of Medical Practitioners in Employment (LAD), and, through these, with the health insurance funds and other bodies.

A new code of the Consilium Neuro-Psychiatricum went into effect in . This consilium consisted of chambers for psychiatry and neurology and a Consilium Contratum (with representatives of both chambers) and had an advisory role towards the Main Board on all issues that had an effect on training as a specialist.

The CC carried out a change in the specialisation, which was prepared by the society. This was concerned with recognition of the three separate specialisms: psychiatry, neurology, and nervous and mental illnesses ().

As was the case in , at the birth of the Netherlands Society of Psychiatry and Neurology, psychiatrists were again the main driving force behind the complete separation in . Psychiatry had become an immense discipline, which was ripe for further differentiation. It goes without saying that this was equally applicable to neurology. As a result, two new academic specialist societies were formed in , one of which was the Netherlands Society of Neurology.

In view of the fact that initially much remained unchanged in the new society, we present below a family tree showing the branches of the organisation as they had grown until the new tree was planted. We will discuss the way in which this relates to neurology in the Netherlands until in the description of the new society that follows.

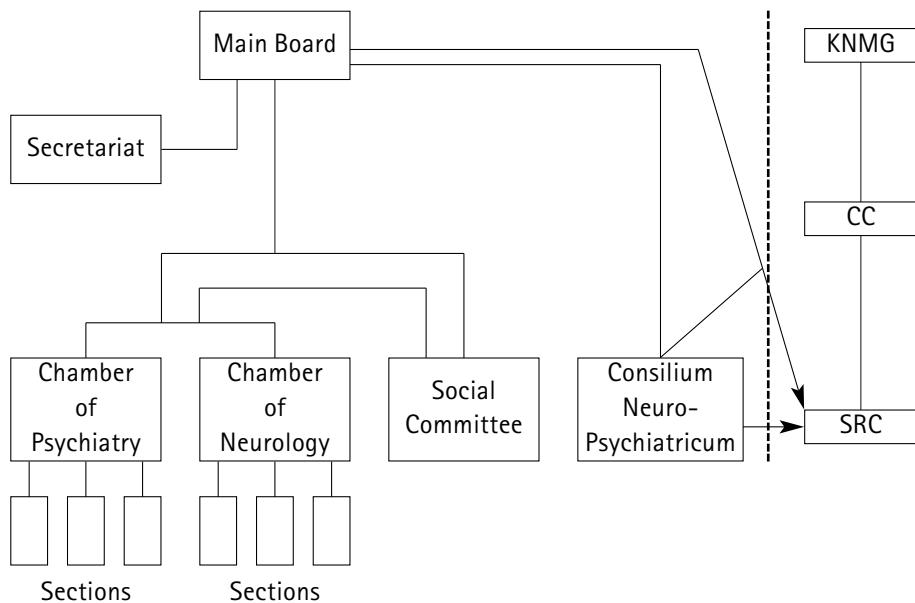


Figure . The branches of the organisation.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE NETHERLANDS SOCIETY OF NEUROLOGY 1980 – 2000

The Netherlands Society of Neurology has been an independent organisation since January 1980. The society is managed by the Board, which is elected at the annual general meeting.

The board is assisted and advised by a number of advisory organs. The oldest and one of the most important organs is the Consilium Neurologicum.

Since the early nineties the Consilium has comprised teachers from Neurology A Studies, a representative of B Studies, and an observer from the teaching clinics for Clinical Neurophysiology.

The Consilium draws up the training requirements and submits them as recommendations to the board of the society. The board then presents the requirements to the members at the annual general meeting, and, following approval by the meeting, they are submitted to the Central Board and the Medical Specialists Registration Committee (MSRC). The requirements take effect following approval by this body.

The Central Board of Medical Specialists, an organ assembled by the KNMG from representatives of the teaching hospitals and non-teaching hospitals, decides on proposals received from the consilia of the various societies of medical specialisms with respect to the training requirements, the execution of which will be monitored by the MSRC. The proposal for training requirements, as formulated by the Consilium, is submitted for further execution to the board of the society, which submits it for approval to the annual general meeting.

Another committee that has been important since the eighties in this regard is the Neurology Training Regulation Committee (CRON). The committee determines the number of junior doctors for each training institute in the Netherlands on the basis of a gentleman's agreement.

The Professional Practice Committee (CBU) advises the board of the Neurology Society on the social and financial aspects of the practice of the profession of neurologist in the Netherlands. This has had significant consequences for neurologists, particularly in recent years.

A committee formed in the eighties, the Quality Improvement Committee, advises the board on various quality aspects of the practice of the neurology profession. The committee comprises a number of subcommittees, as follows:

- Accreditation Committee: This committee determines which congresses, supplementary training and refresher courses are to be eligible for the necessary 'points' that enable a registered neurologist to renew his registration after a period of years.
- Guidelines Committee: This committee assembles committees that make proposals regarding the diagnostics and treatment of certain syndromes to the Quality Committee and ultimately to the Board of the Society, which submits the proposals to the annual general meeting for approval.
- Inspection committee: This committee carries out visits and conducts assessments on site on the quality of medical treatment of the local neurological partnerships.

Another committee formed in the eighties is the Postgraduate Training Committee. This committee sets up at least two postgraduate training courses each year to put neurologists in the Netherlands in a position to enhance or refresh their knowledge. These courses, since called 'Biemond courses', also form part of the training for junior doctors.

A committee that works in close collaboration with the postgraduate training committee is the Appraisal Committee. Once or twice each year, this committee organises an assessment of all registered neurologists and junior doctors in training, in relation to general neurological subjects, and specifically to courses organised in the past year by the Postgraduate Training Committee.

In addition to these advisory bodies that concentrate on the content or execution of the profession, the board is also supported by a number of other committees, as follows:

- the PR and Public Information Committee;
- the Neurology Internet Group;
- the Neurology Scientific Research Committee;
- the Disability Committee;
- the Neurology Coding System Committee

Internationally, the Dutch Society is a member of the World Federation of Neurology and of the Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes (UEMS). The latter sets out to harmonise the training of neurologists in the European Union. Finally, the society is affiliated with the European Federation of Neurology, which organises annual scientific congresses and publishes an official journal, *The European Journal of Neurology*.

The Netherlands Society of Neurology publishes a scientific journal jointly with the Netherlands Neurosurgery Society and the Flemish Society of Neurologists, under the title *Clinical Neurology and Neurosurgery*.

The Society also publishes a non-academic informative journal, *The Neurologist*.

The Netherlands Society of Neurology is represented on various committees at a national level:

- the Central Supervisory Body for Peer Assessment (CBO);
- the Order of Medical Specialists;
- the Plenary Council for Science, Training and Quality of the Order of Medical Specialists;
- the Quality Platform of the Order of Medical Specialists;
- the Training Fund & Capacity Agency of the Order of Medical Specialists;
- the Epilepsy Federation;
- the Medical Advisory Board of the Parkinson Society;
- the Dutch Heart Foundation;
- the Medical Board Foundation CVA Netherlands;
- the National Society of Medical Practitioners in Employment (LAD);
- the Neurofederation of NWO;
- the Neurology - Epilepsy Consultative Body.

Finally, the Society has a number of working groups and sections:

- the Belgian-Dutch Neuromuscular Study Club;
- the Dutch Guillain-Barré Study Group;
- the History of the Neurosciences Section;
- the Interfaculty Neurology Scientific Education (IWON);
- the Netherlands Headache Society;
- the Dutch-Flemish Extrapyramidal Disorders Working Group;
- the National Botulin Working Group;
- Neuro-ophthalmology;
- Neuro-oncology;
- Impotence;
- Spinal Marrow Stimulation;
- the Pain Section;
- the Sleep Disorders Working Group;
- the Neuro-AIDS Working Group.

Note

We wish to express our thanks to Prof. Dr J. Troost in Maastricht for providing information on the period after .

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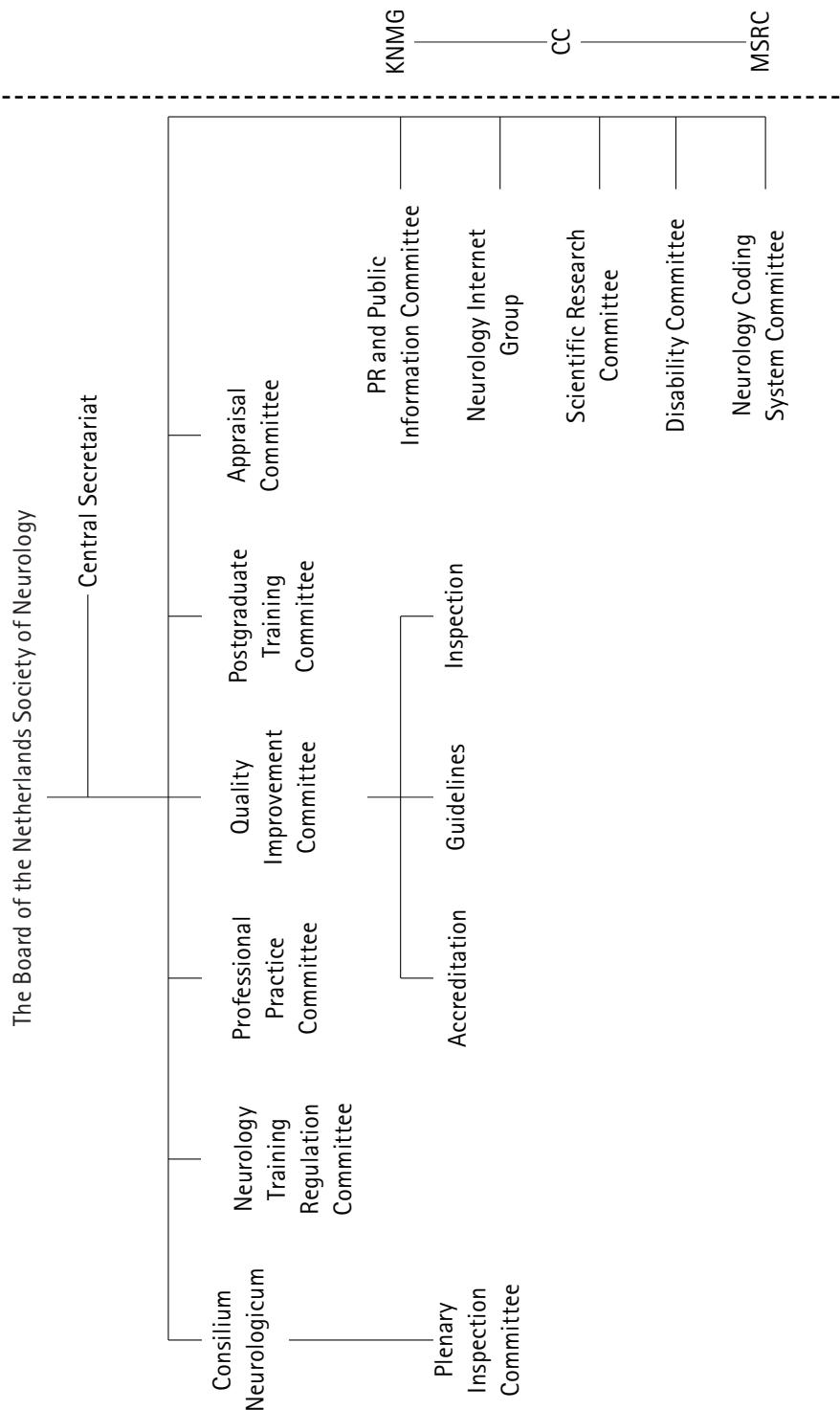


Figure . The board of the Netherlands Society of Neurology.