Sustainable quality improvement in nursing and caregiving

Nurses and caregivers together form the largest group of healthcare professionals in the Netherlands. They work in all sectors of healthcare and form an essential link to quality prevention, care and support for citizens, patients and healthcare professionals. ZonMw supports nurses and caregivers by providing the knowledge needed to be able to carry out this pivotal role effectively.

Sustainable quality improvement in nursing and caregiving

ZonMw contributes to sustainable quality improvement in the nursing and caregiving professions by:

- identifying knowledge needs;
- knowledge development;
- translating knowledge into everyday practice;
- using knowledge in everyday practice.

Figure 1 illustrates the ZonMw model for sustainable quality improvement.

ZonMw achieves this by awarding grants for projects and commissions, by promoting and supporting infrastructures, and by linking and sharing knowledge. ZonMw cooperates with professionals in policy development, research, education and everyday practice. A number of ZonMw programmes are specifically designed for nurses and caregivers. These programmes are aimed at strengthening research infrastructures, developing quality standards and guidelines, and encouraging education and training for community nurses. The nursing and caregivers sector also plays a big part in other ZonMw programmes which are aimed at palliative care, elderly care and youth healthcare.

Identifying knowledge needs

Quality improvement is an ongoing process which leads to new knowledge questions. We identify knowledge needs through consultations with stakeholders, exploratory interviews, invitational conferences, social media campaigns, etc. Government contractors such as the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research or other stakeholders may also identify knowledge needs in practice.

ZonMw develops and implements programmes to meet the knowledge needs of nurses and caregivers, in cooperation with professionals in the field. These programmes are monitored and evaluated and the results may lead to the identification of new knowledge needs.

Knowledge development

Within grant programmes, ZonMw works on developing scientific knowledge and researching practice-based knowledge. For example, how can nurses and caregivers offer patients the best possible support in self-management and helping them be in control of their own healthcare needs?
Excellent research requires a good infrastructure in which universities, universities of applied sciences, vocational colleges, institutions and professionals all play an active role. ZonMw’s efforts include investing in a leadership programme for postdoctoral researchers and in ambassador programmes for community nurses and caregivers.

Translating knowledge into everyday practice
ZonMw contributes to finding ways to translate knowledge gained through research into everyday practice. For example, by supporting the development of quality standards and guidelines in cooperation with V&VN Dutch Nurses and Caregivers Association. These standards and guidelines define what good healthcare is and provide agreements on who offers what type of care and when for specific topics. Such as overburdened informal caregivers and loneliness.

ZonMw also promotes the development and maintenance of information platforms such as www.zorgvoorbeter.nl for nursing staff, caregivers and home care workers. These platforms include a large amount of reliable, relevant and up-to-date information for healthcare workers such as practical examples, tools, guidelines and practical tips.

Using knowledge in everyday practice
The rapid pace of developments in the nursing and caregiving sector makes it difficult for professionals to keep up with and use new knowledge in the everyday practice. ZonMw works with institutes of professional education at vocational, university of applied sciences and university level to ensure that students are taught how to apply new expertise in practice. ZonMw also supports networks in which healthcare professionals and teachers exchange knowledge, experiences and ideas and promotes the use of online knowledge platforms.