

NEWSLETTER



NUMBER 4

HOPE

SEPTEMBER 2023

Responding to
Heatwaves in the Older
People Ecosystem



THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED ARTICLES:

IMPACT OF HEATWAVES ON OLDER PEOPLE ECOSYSTEM

- Editorial: heatwaves and seniors health
by prof. Henk Rosendal, University of Applied Sciences Rotterdam,
- HOPE Going local:
 - Focus on the 4th transnational partner meeting – Rotterdam 6, 7 June 2023;
by Esther Wienese, Project leader Rotterdam Heat Plan, Municipality of Rotterdam;
 - The single biggest health threat facing humanity,
by Sem Gerritse, University of Applied Sciences Rotterdam
- Targeting refugees' resilience and climate
by Hanadi Al-Baz, city of Rotterdam
- EU and partners news: next transnational partner meeting, Treviso 28-29 November 2023



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1. HEATWAVES AND SENIOR'S HEALTH

by prof. Henk Rosendal, University of Applied Sciences Rotterdam

Heatwaves have enormous impact on the health of people, especially elderly. More and more evidence is published about the effects of extreme hot periods on morbidity and mortality. Very recently a study was published showing that in the summer of 2022 over 61.000 people in Europe died because of heat-stress.

(<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-023-02419->). It cannot be denied that heatwaves have a huge, negative impact on our quality of life, morbidity, mortality and, therefore, on societal costs. In words of the researchers, their results 'call for a reevaluation and strengthening of existing heat surveillance platforms, prevention plans and long-term adaptation strategies.'

Our Hope-project addresses these challenges by several angles. First of all, a sense of urgency amongst health- and welfare professionals, policy makers and, of course, European citizens has to be increased.

Heatwaves, as a result from climate-change, are to be considered as a growing healthcare problem.

We have to think not only about direct interventions which can help to reduce the immediate effects of heat on our health, but also, and above all, about measurements that will have an impact on the cause of heatwaves: climate change.

Of course, the latter challenge is too big for our project. On the other hand, focusing only on direct, individual measurements can to some extent be considered as 'mopping with an open tap'. Although highly effective, we should do one without leaving the other.

Climate change and heatwaves can be regarded as so-called wicked problems, which demand a broad approach to deal with.



We are about halfway the project now, and we have built a robust body of knowledge with respect to the impact of heatwaves, and applicable tools. We have brought policymakers, inhabitants, researchers and students together in finding evidence, good practices and policy recommendations. That is impact. We have published several articles about Hope. That too is impact. The next step, which is already being taken right now, is that all Hope-partners bring their experiences and learnings into their own network, increasing a sense of urgency as well as disseminating knowledge about effective measurements on different levels: individual, living situation and local surroundings. Everything in order to increase impact. Using effective measurements and abandoning useless or harmful interventions will have an impact on people's health. Within our Hope-project a database consisting effective measurements has been developed.

The next project-milestone will be the publication of an e-learning for students, and a MOOC (open online course) for professionals and caregivers, using that body of knowledge. That will have impact on the education of professionals, as well as on professionals themselves. The necessity of developing these kinds of tools from a student-perspective in different forms of education is being addressed in this Newsletter by Sem Pieter Gerritse.

We Hope that students and professionals from all European countries will use these new tools, and so will learn how to deal effectively with heatwaves. On every level. That will have a great impact on the health of elderly, and maybe result to a significant lower number than 61.000 European heat-victims a year. In conclusion: Hope is all about impact!



HOPE Transnational Partners' Meeting Rotterdam, 7th June 2023

2. HOPE GOING LOCAL:

There is "HOPE" in Rotterdam 4th Transnational Project Meeting - 6,7 June 2023

by Esther Wienese -Project leader Rotterdam Heat Plan, Municipality of Rotterdam

The **Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences** and the **Municipality of Rotterdam** hosted the Transnational Meeting for the partners of HOPE Project - HOPE Heatwaves (hope-heatwaves.eu) on June 6 and 7. The visit was perfectly timed because the **RIVM issued a heat warning on June 6 because very hot weather** was predicted for several days. Never before has it been so warm this early in summer in Holland.

Day 1 with the partners of HOPE from **Treviso-Italy, Amadora-Portugal, Syros-Greece** and **ELISAN-Brussels** has been the so-called trial day. In the Heuveltop room on the sun-drenched roof of Gebouw de Heuvel, we coordinated the progress of the sub-projects we are working on:

- the **e-learning** about heat and the elderly for care providers (in training)
- a **MOOC** with best practices for healthcare managers
- **heat guidelines** for municipalities and regions in Europe.

An important motivation for the follow-up is: How do we make an impact? How do we provide an attractive and appealing form and content? How do we ensure awareness among the target group, etc.

Day 2 was in Het Gemaal in the Afrikaanderwijk. Here we brainstormed in May with key figures about 'Code Red': Suppose it is 40 degrees in the neighborhood for 4 days. What happens then? We continue the research to design a district heat protocol that can serve as an example for other districts.

On this even warmer day, we showed our partners how actively and broadly we are working with heat in Rotterdam.



Keeping cool with heatweaves alert in Rotterdam, June 7 2023

- We learned lessons from the local COVID communication approach in Rotterdam. The target groups of Corona and heat are often the same, hence.
- We were shocked by the results of the RUAS research into heat in homes in the Bloemhof district, where it can be more than 30 degrees under the flat roofs at night.
- We met the people of the mobile 'Energy bus' which gives citizens practical tips about heating and cooling your home.
- We became aware that the Red Cross uses volunteers in times of crisis, including during heat waves.
- We got an insight into the inclusivity program of the municipality of Rotterdam on climate inequality: the poorest neighbourhoods are the warmest neighbourhoods.
- We received tips on how to deal with heat from refugees from warm countries who have found their home in Rotterdam, with attention to their enormous resilience that we can learn from.

- We enjoyed the short play 'Hot he' by Theatre Workshop for Ouwe Rotten (by and for senior citizens of Rotterdam) that humorously (not patronizingly) encourages the elderly to self-care during heat.
- And we visited the recently opened Garden of the Neighbourhood, which was built by residents to cool the street and meet each other, and the leafy Botanical Garden where people can cool off on warm days.

The partners experienced the days as inspiring, food for the soul, enriching and a celebration of creativity. **Alderman Ronald Buijt**, responsible for care and the elderly, thanked all the partners.



HOPE Transnational Partners' Meeting roof of Gebouw de Heuvel
Rotterdam, June 6 2023

The single biggest health threat facing humanity

by Sem Gerritse, University of Applied Sciences Rotterdam

The single biggest health threat facing humanity, and I have never heard about it in the faculty of healthcare sciences.

In many fields and universities, students learn about climate change and its effects on their future jobs and industries. For example, architecture students learn about climate change because it is evident and apparent how it impacts their future work field. When walking through a house without sufficient protection against sunlight, one can literally feel the increased temperature, and the damage caused by extreme floods, rainfall, or droughts to the foundation, sewage system, or roof is clearly visible or can be detected by smell – the causality is obvious. This is just one example, but when it comes to human health and the healthcare sector, the situation is quite different; the causality is often less obvious.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity[1]." Despite this widespread recognition based on solid evidence, healthcare students are not adequately educated about it – if not educated at all.

What is the point of learning about rare genetic conditions, specific medical procedures or actually anything at all if we aren't even aware of the most significant health threat humanity is facing? We should be equipped with tools and knowledge to mitigate climate change and deal with its effects on human health. Imagine if a mysterious virus emerged and in three months' time caused an excess mortality of 5% (2,000 extra deaths) in the Netherlands. Everyone would hear about it, and physicians, researchers, and the government would work together to develop a vaccine and combat the cause immediately, right? Now, imagine if climate change was the cause of this significant rise in deaths – what would happen then? Unfortunately, we don't have to imagine this scenario to know the answer; during the second quarter of 2023 this is exactly what happened, according to Statistics Netherlands (CBS)[2]. They found that higher than average temperatures (heatwaves) cost the lives of mostly older people in the Netherlands. Yet, nothing happened, it didn't make headlines, and no physicians, researchers, or government bodies raised the alarm.



[1] <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

[2] <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2023/28/excess-mortality-in-june>

This problem can only be solved through education, in my opinion. Educating future health professionals is crucial in increasing knowledge and awareness. While e-learning could be a first step towards knowledge and awareness, they should not be the ultimate goal when it comes to educating about climate change and health. The goal should be that the curricula of every future healthcare professional include mandatory courses focused on the inseparable relation between humans, health, and the environment – a concept known as planetary health.

You may wonder, who am I to say this? Well, I am a healthcare student and a climate activist myself. I study Allied Medical Care at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, and after a four-year bachelor's degree, I will be working in acute healthcare – on the ambulance, in the Emergency Room, the Intensive Care Unit, or the Cath lab.

During my internships and side jobs, I witness hospitals and other health organizations working on, and even struggling with, the topic of climate change and the national goals that must be met.

How can it be that I, freshly out of university and supposedly aware of all topical and relevant developments and challenges, lack the knowledge to contribute to this quest to reduce the impact of climate change on healthcare and vice versa? Climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity, and we should start treating it as such now – especially in health care faculties.



Sem Gerritse, University of Applied Sciences, Rotterdam

3. MY JOURNEY INTO CLIMATE RESILIENCE: UNVEILING THE POWER OF PERSONAL NARRATIVES

By Hanadi Al-Baz (City of Rotterdam)

For the past three years, I have delved deeply into the world of climate resilience of refugees, particularly focusing on how they cope with extreme heatwaves. This journey has taken me across borders and into the lives of over 50 individuals from diverse regions. Through countless interviews and hours of research, I've come to a profound conclusion: when crafting effective climate adaptation policies, we must look beyond conventional vulnerability indicators and acknowledge the multifaceted capacities individuals possess to mitigate the effects of our changing climate. It's about examining the unique cart of life experiences that each person carries.

The Challenge of Climate Change

Climate change is an undeniable global crisis, one that requires us to unite in our efforts to mitigate its impact. Among those most affected are refugees, who often find themselves in unfamiliar environments, struggling to adapt to new climates, and grappling with the extreme weather events caused by a warming planet. Among these events, heatwaves stand out as particularly dangerous, especially for vulnerable populations like the older adults.

A Deeper Understanding of Resilience

In my quest to understand climate resilience among refugees, I realized that the standard categorization of people as "vulnerable" neglects the rich tapestry of personal experiences and knowledge that individuals bring with them from their cultural, religious, professional, and geographical backgrounds.



Hanadi Al-Baz, City of Rotterdam

My Journey with Amanuel

Allow me to introduce you to Amanuel, a remarkable individual from Eritrea who now calls Rotterdam in the Netherlands home. Amanuel's story serves as a prime example to the power of personal narratives in climate resilience.

Dietary Wisdom

Amanuel's adaptation to extreme heatwaves began with a change in his diet. Drawing from his Eritrean roots, he incorporated a fascinating blend of foods known for their cooling properties—cucumbers, watermelons, and yogurt, but also spicy and warm dishes. This intriguing combination wasn't just about culinary preference; it was a profound connection to his heritage that helped his body regulate temperature. Spices, often considered 'warming' in traditional medicine, allowed him to cool down by promoting perspiration and internal cooling, a practice deeply rooted in his culture.

Cultural Daily Rhythms

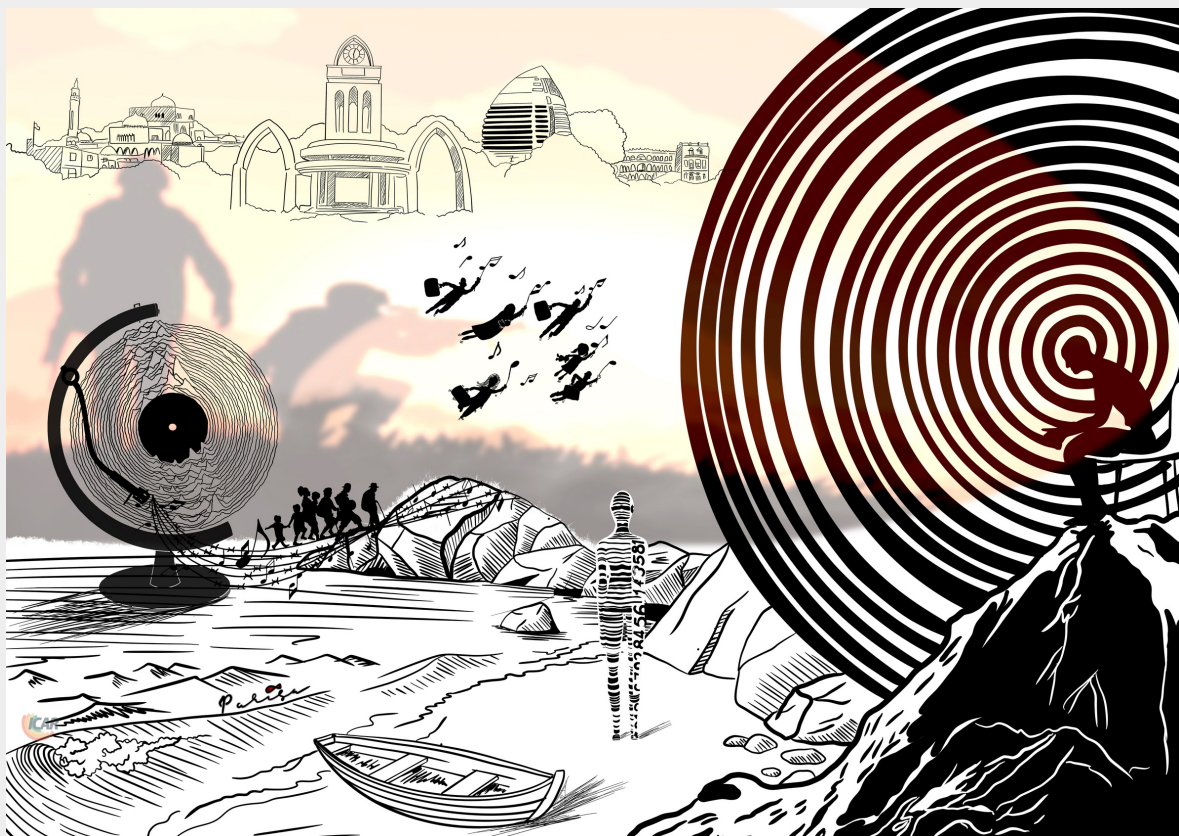
Amanuel also made adjustments to his daily routine, aligning it with the practice of the "siesta" prevalent in many hot climates. By resting during the hottest hours and resuming activity in the cooler evenings, he conserved energy and reduced his vulnerability to heat-related illnesses. His adherence to this age-old tradition showcased the wisdom embedded in his cultural heritage.

Environmental Adaptations

Amanuel's adaptation extended to his sleeping arrangements. He chose to sleep on the lower levels of his dwelling, where the temperature naturally stayed cooler, foregoing the need for energy-intensive air conditioning. This simple yet effective measure displayed his intimate knowledge of his surroundings, an awareness born of geographical experience.

Valuing Personal Narratives

Amanuel's story, among many others I encountered during my research, underscores the imperative of recognizing and valuing personal narratives in our climate adaptation policies. To truly address the challenges posed by climate change, we must move beyond statistical categorizations of vulnerability and delve into the unique capacities and experiences that each individual possesses. Effective climate adaptation policies requires a profound shift in perspective. It's about acknowledging that the diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences that refugees bring with them are valuable assets in the fight against climate change. These personal narratives, like Amanuel's, are a source of wisdom that can guide us toward a more resilient and adaptable future. In our pursuit of a sustainable world.



Amanuel's story illustrated by Parisa Akbarzadehpolaadi, Rotterdam 2022

4. EU AND PARTNERS NEWS:

Next transnational partner meeting, ISRAA, Treviso 28-29 November 2023

ISRAA is going to start the activities of the newly approved projects about active ageing. In particular there are three news opportunities that are going to start on September 2023:

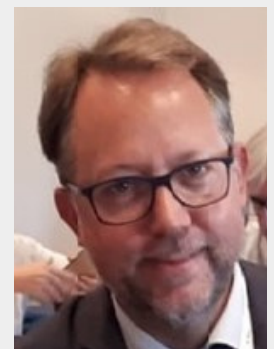
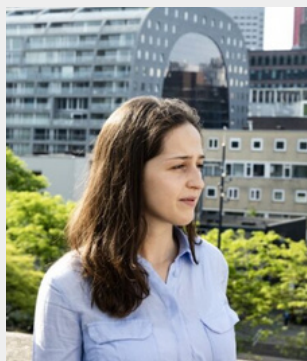
- **VIAttiva** that is funded by the Veneto Region and deals with promoting the physical activity in the Third Age, combined with cognitive screenings and mindfulness practices. The Projects will implement the actions foreseen by the regional law about the active ageing delivered on 2017. It will engage seven Partners that are: The AULSS2 Marca Trevigiana, the “Monumento ai caduti in guerra” of San Donà di Piave (VE), Cooperativa Orchidea, the University of Padua – Faculty of Sport Medicine and the following municipalities: Breda di Piave (TV), Silea, Treviso. Then eight volunteer organisations will be engaged as associated partner.

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AgeWell is funded by the European Programme Erasmus Plus and is about the creation of a functional training for professionals to improve their knowledge on physical activity with an app and a platform to be used among the older adults.

In the end, thanks to the Erasmus+ project **Simpli4Emotions**, ISRAA will have the opportunity to implement a simulation game (digital and physical) for health professionals based on emotional self-regulation to act in a complex and dynamic environment and deal with situations involving conflict.

With all these opportunities, ISRAA is glad to welcome the HOPE consortium in the 4th Transnational Project Meeting on 28-29 November 2023 in Treviso.



Davide Tuis, Francesca Masiero, Marta Mattarucco, Oscar Zanutto ISRAA Treviso

FROM THE EU AND WHO: STAYING SAFE IN THE HEAT

Temperatures were soaring this summer with heatwaves across Europe affecting the health and livelihoods of millions of people. Heatwaves are the deadliest extreme weather events in Europe, placing vulnerable people like the elderly, those with underlying chronic conditions and the occupationally exposed at additional risk. The European Commission, together with the WHO/Europe, have therefore published ten tips to protect your health and to stay safe in the heat, which were developed in partnership with the Health Security Committee.

[Factsheet: Stay safe in the heat – 10 tips to protect your health](#)

The HOPE partnership is joining these efforts targeting older adults!

GREETINGS FROM THE HOPE PARTNERSHIP!



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