Amsterdam UMC

SELF-EVALUATION 2017–2022

Amsterdam Public Health

Around **1,700 researchers** affiliated to the research institute

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Over **3,000 peer reviewed academic publications** each year

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Around **800 societal publications** each year

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More than **100 PhD theses** produced per year

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Over **€40 million** of research funding per year acquired

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More than **25 longitudinal cohort studies** and health (care) registries

The Amsterdam Public Health research institute (APH) is a network institute incorporating over 1,700 researchers from several faculties of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) and the University of Amsterdam (UvA). Founded in 2016, APH forms an important link between academic research, outpatient care practices, inpatient clinical care, local communities, and government policy in the Amsterdam metropolitan area.

Mission and vision

Much of the research conducted within APH is designed to have a direct impact on society, policy, and practice. Together with our academic and non-academic partners, we promote state-of-the-art research to enhance the health potential of individuals, communities, and populations across the life course. This is implicit in our slogans "Health for all, powered by science" and "Think globally, act locally." We test what has been learned elsewhere, and we disseminate what we learn in Amsterdam across the rest of the world, and vice versa.

Eight research programs

Our research efforts in the 2017–2022 period were concentrated in eight research programs, covering major public health themes along the life course: Health Behaviors and Chronic Diseases; Mental Health; Societal Participation and Health; Global Health; Aging and Later Life; Quality of Care; Personalized Medicine; and Methodology.

Strategic themes and accomplishments from 2017 to 2022

Our main strategic themes and activities in the past six years are reflected in a series of accomplishments:

- Reinforced research network by organizing institute-wide and program-specific or career-level-specific events and stimulated collaborations and knowledge exchange.
- Creation of translational research collaborations with partners in the Amsterdam area, often sustained in academic collaborative centers. We made our research institute a natural partner in issues of valorization and implementation. From 2020 onwards, those efforts were supported by our Amsterdam Center of Implementation Science (AmsCIS).
- Supported the next generation of public health researchers and encouraged active participation in the Public Health and Care Leadership Program (PHCR) and awarded strategic postdoctoral fellowships.
- Secured the sustainability and viability of cohort studies. Guided by the Amsterdam Cohort Network (ACN), which we initiated in 2021, APH has led the development of a strategic plan for a cohort coordination hub.
- Fostered high scientific quality and open science, focusing on an open academic culture and FAIR data management.

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM   VU VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

A renewed **APH Quality Handbook** was launched with information, structured by the research life cycle, to enhance research quality

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Over **20 academic collaborative centers** where practice, research, education and policy are connected

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Multiple **annual conferences** for internal researchers and external stakeholders

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Numerous of prestigious national or international personal or consortium **grants awarded**

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Active APH committees for **PhD Education** and **Scientific Quality**

www.amsterdamumc.org/aph

Ambitions and future plans

We look forward to continuing growth and accomplishments in the coming years. Urgent environmental threats, growing health disparities, and the COVID-19 pandemic have heightened recognition among policymakers and the general public of the importance of public health knowledge and expertise. It is incumbent on APH to act on such opportunities, in order to ensure an optimal, sustainable response to grand societal challenges. For the coming years, APH will concentrate its efforts on the following themes:

- Addressing the climate crisis through translational research aimed at system-wide changes.
- Strengthening health system resilience and APH's institutional resilience by consolidating the learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Creating value through the digitalization of healthcare while overcoming inherent risks.
- Building on the new APH research program Digital Health, which was launched in 2023, APH will strive to be at the forefront of the rapid developments in data science and artificial intelligence.
- In all APH's activities, more emphasis will be put on APH's ongoing efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), with the aims of ensuring equal participation and health benefits for all people in the Amsterdam area and beyond.
- Enhancing efforts to translate knowledge and expertise into impactful initiatives that benefit society, improve public health, leveraging our Amsterdam Center of Implementation Science (AmsCIS), our Impact Developer, and our engagement with stakeholders at local and national levels.

APH thereby assumes responsibility for promoting the transformations needed to enhance and sustain the health potential of individuals, communities, and populations across the life course.

Case studies

Two highlights from the social initiatives and events in which APH researchers participated:

About 75% of all psychological problems have their onset at ages younger than 25, but only 30% of young people receive help at the right time. The threshold for reaching out for help is often too high. Many young people feel ashamed, do not know where to seek help, or are waitlisted for long periods. APH researchers have worked to provide change for young people in such situations by setting up the **@EASE initiative** in Amsterdam (Arne Popma et al.). It enables people aged 12 to 25 to walk in or chat online to discuss their feelings. Participation is anonymous, requires no appointment, and is free of charge. The volunteers at @EASE work together with trained professionals from local healthcare and mental health agencies to avert psychological and social problems in the young participants. Multiple @EASE locations have opened in Amsterdam.

From 2019 onwards, APH researchers have participated each year in the innovation hackathon **Hacking Health Amsterdam**. Extraordinary multidisciplinary teams composed of people from a variety of backgrounds – from scientists to creative designers and from doctors to data managers – work together to clarify a specific urgent problem in healthcare and find a solution. Examples of solutions for which APH researchers received awards and funding are the screening instrument Uit Je Hoofd ("out of your head"), which can detect early signs of depression in children of parents with depression; a tool called HartMaatje ("heartmate"), which helps cardiac patients maintain healthy lifestyles after hospital discharge to prevent recurrence; and the TEAM-ME tool, which helps schoolchildren recognize when they feel unhappy at school.