

# INTO THE WORLD - EXPERIENCES AND VIEWS OF MEDICAL DOCTORS GLOBAL HEALTH AND TROPICAL MEDICINE

Written by **Marlies Hummelen et al.**  
 Edited by **Matthijs Botman**  
 204 p., hard-cover. English or Dutch.  
 Price EURO 28,50.

Into the world is available through  
[www.boekschap.nl](http://www.boekschap.nl) or [www.artsinternationalegezondheidszorg.nl](http://www.artsinternationalegezondheidszorg.nl)

**A**n intriguing title, an intriguing book - *Into the world* takes the reader on a journey into the world of those formerly known as 'tropical doctors'. The new name, 'medical doctor Global Health and Tropical Medicine' (AIGT) is perhaps less catchy, but it better represents what this type of doctor stands for. In twelve interviews with such doctors, all with a different backgrounds and career paths, we learn about the diverse facets of their role in the global health field - then and now, here and there. André Veneman still feels like a 'tropical doctor' even now in his current position as corporate director Sustainability for AkzoNobel, many years after he started his career as a young doctor in a refugee camp in Thailand in the 1980s. Erna Rijnierse also works with refugees in her function as medical doctor in the emergency team of MSF. She deals with 'modern day' refugees. After several decades, the needs are still there. Or are they? To a certain extent, yes, though perhaps varying in form and scope.

Take for example Namibia, where the country is welcoming its first batch of Namibian trained medical doctors. For Steffie Heemelaar - an AIGT working in Namibia and doing PhD research - this is a valid question. And the answer is not clear-cut, as this book aptly illustrates. Others also reflect on the new role of MD GH and TM, like Marijke Wijnroks - once a young doctor working for MSF in South Sudan who made a career in international health diplomacy. 'We should be investing in

capacity building for doctors in low- and middle-income countries'. But hands-on experience is very valuable, especially in the field of global health policies. A common thread in all the stories here is the added value of the experience abroad. For some, the years abroad helped shape their focus in the Netherlands. These years also helped make participants more critical of their own health system. Albertine Baauw - former tropical doctor, now paediatrician - points to the irrational choices we make in the Netherlands such as not including standard screening for immigrant children arriving here from epidemiological hotspots.

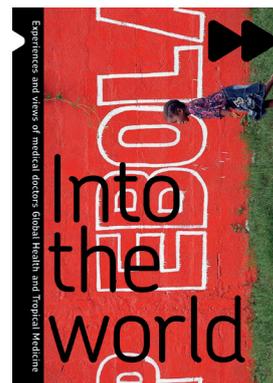
Besides the 12 interviews, *Into the world* also invited 5 health professionals and experts from outside the Netherlands to share their experiences in working with Dutch medical doctors in the field, or to reflect on current issues in global health like the human resources for health dilemmas. Richard Smith - chair of ICDDR,b (formerly International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh) - summarises it by saying 'It's time for the North to learn from the South'. He underlines the vision of Lord Crisp (former chief of the UK NHS) in his book *Turning the world upside down*, 'Health care workers from high-income countries who spend time working in low-income countries may learn much that will benefit health systems in high-income countries. In addition, they develop a set of attitudes and skills that are useful anywhere.'

The book is an enjoyable, thought-provoking and above all inspiring read.

Some years ago, a medical student asked Matthijs Botman - the initiator of the book and of the campaign seeking sustainable funding for the accredited training programme - a question. Should he pursue becoming a 'tropical doctor'? During my days as chair of the NVTG, advocating for quality education for MD GHTM in the Netherlands, we reflected quite extensively on many of the issues this book is dealing with. Rowing against the prevailing current, the NVTG continued to believe in the value of having well trained doctors to fill a gap and build capacity worldwide as well as to strengthen our own health care system. Was it worth it? Judge for yourself by reading this book.



MARTIN BOEREE, MD, PHD  
 FORMER CHAIR OF THE NVTG AND THE COTG  
 (COMMISSION FOR TRAINING MD GHTM)  
 ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN RESPIRATORY MEDICINE  
 RADBOUDUMC, NIJMEGEN, THE NETHERLANDS  
[MARTIN.BOEREE@RADBOUDUMC.NL](mailto:MARTIN.BOEREE@RADBOUDUMC.NL)



THE BEAUTY OF THIS BOOK IS THAT IT HELPS US REFLECT ON OUR ROLE AS HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN A GLOBALISED WORLD.

IS IT STILL WORTHWHILE TO KEEP SENDING OUR HEALTH WORKERS ABROAD?