

Erasmus MC

Universitair Medisch Centrum Rotterdam



Does science matter?

Analysing research-policy-practice interactions

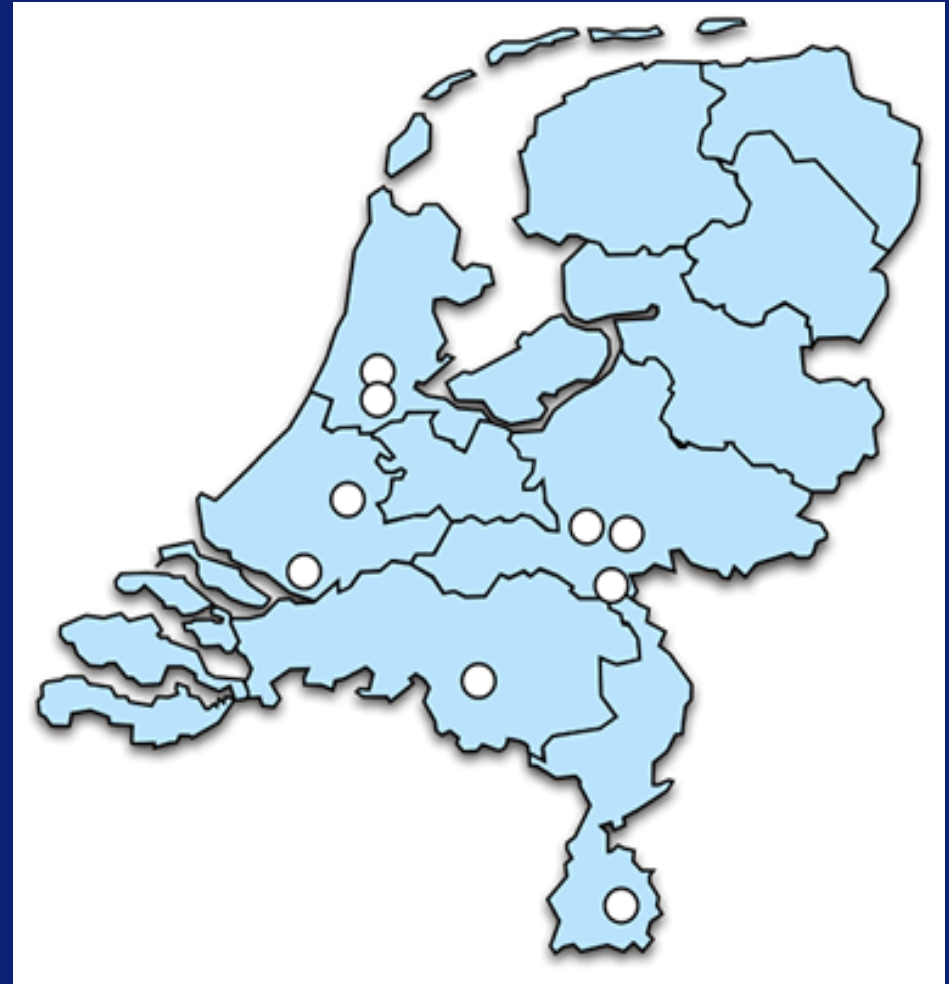
in the Dutch

Academic Collaborative Centres for Public Health (ACC)

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NCC Summer Institute Quebec, July 9, 2009



1. The Dutch national program 2005-2008

Lead: Dutch Organization for Health Research and Development
(ZonMw)

I: 2005-2008 €14 million

II: 2009-2012 €16.3 million

Primary goal: structural strengthening and embedding demand-driven research activities for evidence-based policy and practice

Academic Collaborative Centre = infrastructure

- Collaborative agreement Public Health Service and University

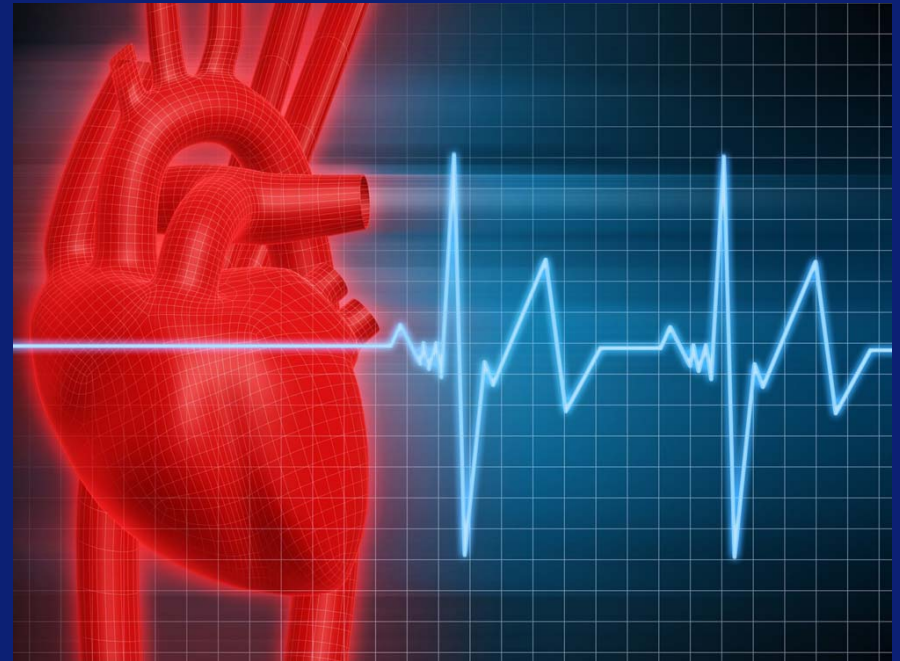
- Subsidizing liaison coordinator + senior research capacity

- Organizational and communication structure, roles and mandates

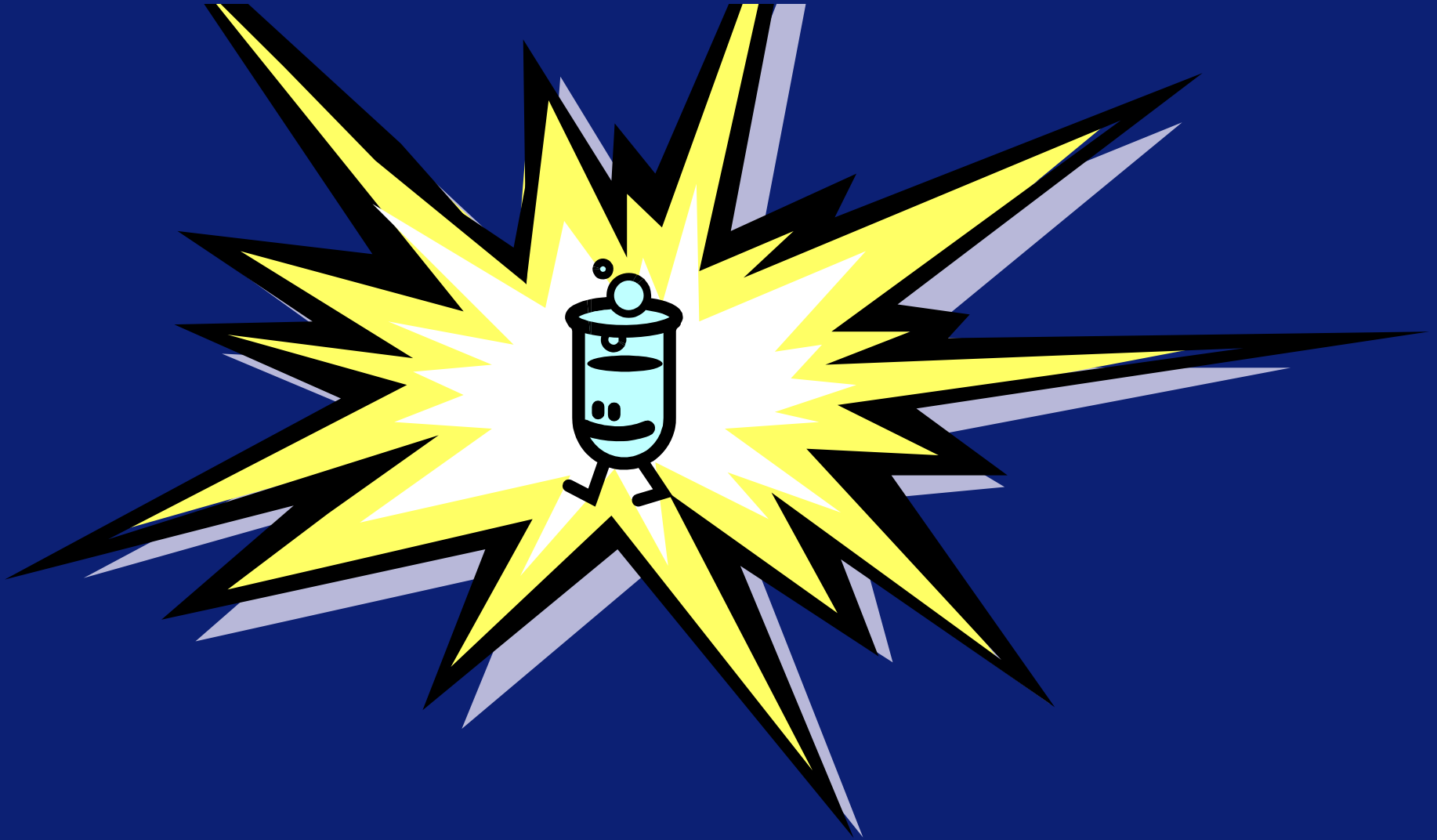
- Two-way access to research and educational facilities

Outline

1. Potential and risk in the ACC
2. 'Evaluation study': analytical approach and design
3. Preliminary observations
4. Conditions and criteria
5. Does science matter?



Potential and risk in the ACC



This is not unthinkable...

(Inter)national stakes are high

Lots of expectations: is science the answer?

Fixed versus flexible definitions and criteria

What kind of health problems
are we dealing with?



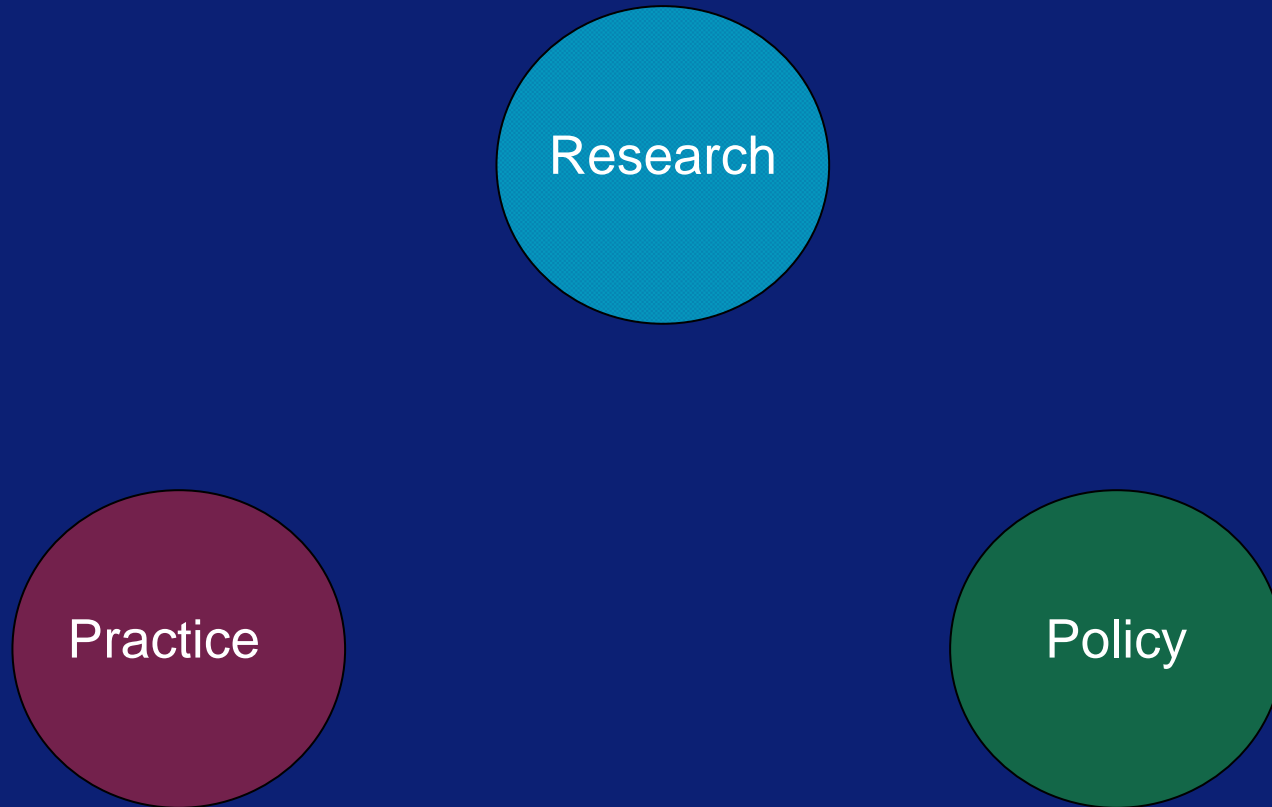
2. 'Evaluation study': Analytical approach and design

Basic question:

How do Academic Collaborative Centres function as *coordinating structures* for public health research, policy and practice and how does this collaborative exchange contribute to the facilitation of evidence-based public health?



Simple heuristic model

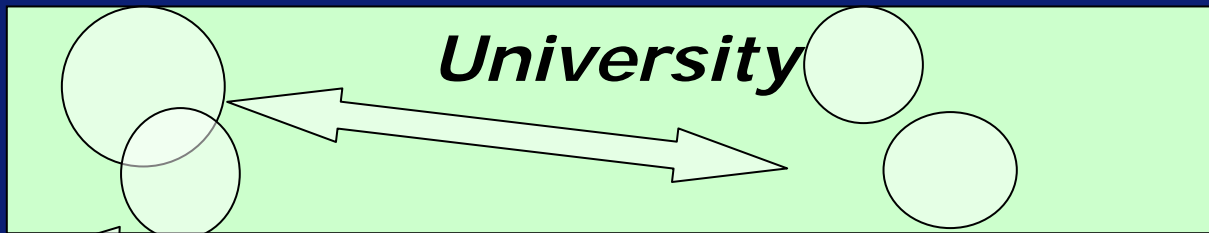


Reality: complex 'realistic' model

International context

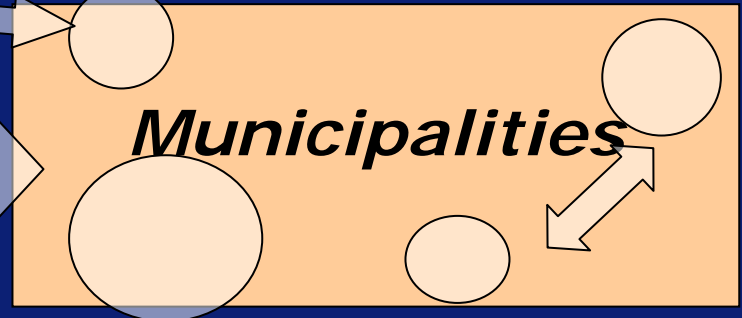
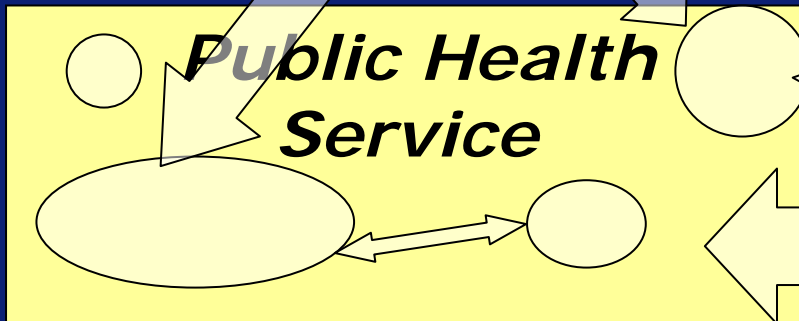
National knowledge
infrastructure

Local and national media



National
branch
organization

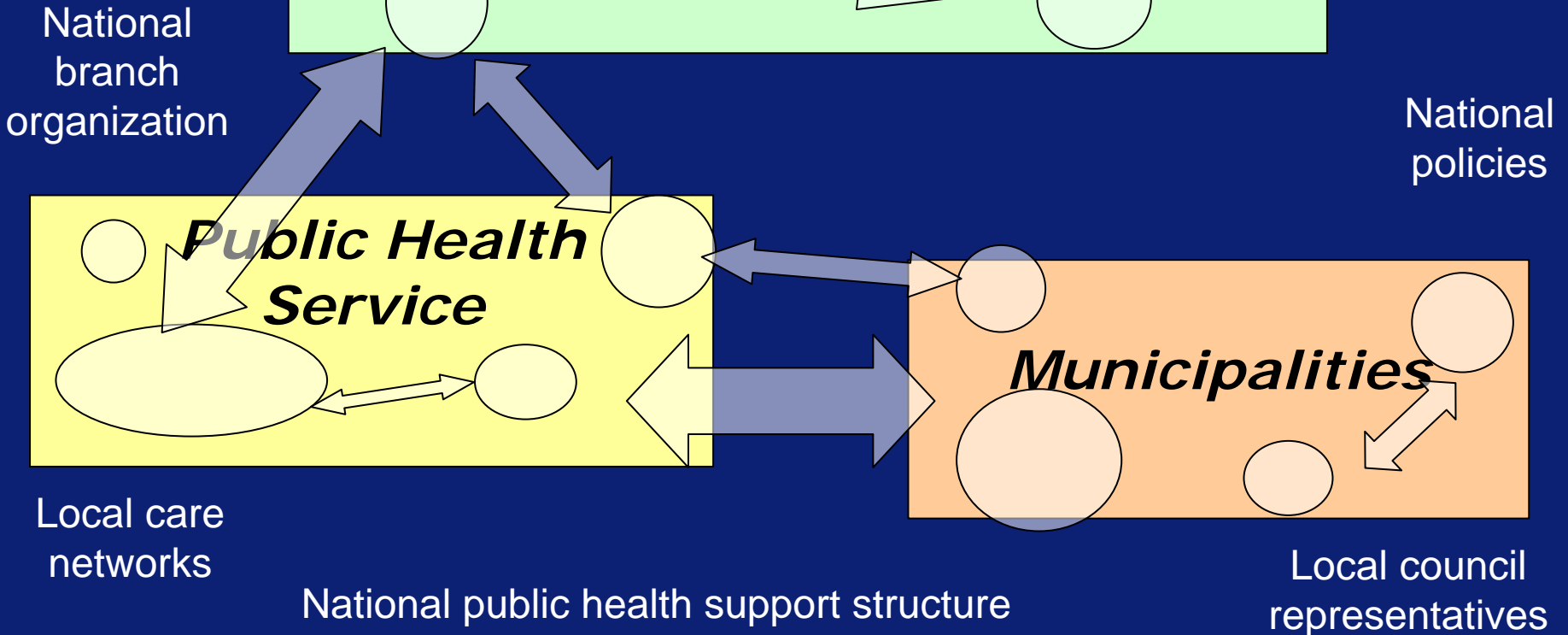
National
policies



Local care
networks

Local council
representatives

National public health support structure



Mixed methods design

Empirical practices are central

First round explorative interviews and document study



Interpretive, explorative case studies

Survey

Game simulation

Second rounds of interviews



Case studies

1. Policy-oriented research format – useful and feasible policy advice

2. RCT of US intervention

‘Nurse-Family Partnership’ in NL

- Effect evaluation

3. Study into health promotion
for the elderly – intervention design

4. Study into the acceptance of vaccination among orthodox
protestant groups – exploring determinants



A. Effect evaluation: the nurse - family partnership



B. Science as policy advice: a modelling study



4. Under which conditions does collaboration pay off?

1. When all the parties involved are 'rewarded' by the process and/or the outcomes
2. When the parties involved feel that their hesitations, questions or critiques are taken seriously by the other parties
3. When the parties involved feel that there is a workable balance between fidelity or protocol adherence and freedom of professional judgment

Under which conditions does collaboration pay off?

4. Expectation management requires a strong coordinator with process management skills
5. Room for closed backstage interactions enables a frontstage presentation of scientifically rigorous and robust products
6. No quick judgments and no quick fixes: it takes perseverance and takes structural embedment in policies, organizations as well as people.

5. Does science matter?



Does science matter?

1. 'the relationship between epidemiology, behaviour-led interventions and policy is more complex than often suggested in scientific evaluations or prospective studies.'
2. Key observation: 'the complexity of *keeping* a behavioural intervention effective in practice is highly underestimated.'
3. Facts and values are not separated: science does not rationalize normative values involved in professional or policy practice
4. Learning from empirical practice offers the best strategy for improving the quality of public health policy and care.

Contact details

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