

"ICF SPOTLIGHT" ON ELS R. NIEUWENHUIJSEN, PH.D.

Occasionally in the NACC ICF Newsletter, we turn the "ICF Spotlight" onto a North American scientist or other professional, in recognition of their contributions to the development or implementation of the ICF in the U.S. or Canada.

In this issue of the Newsletter, we are proud to feature in that Spotlight our colleague Els R. Nieuwenhuijsen Eldersveld, PhD, MPH, OTR, from Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Dr. Nieuwenhuijsen was born and raised in the Netherlands. She has earned the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy while matriculating in Amsterdam, a Master of Public Health degree from the University of Michigan, and the PhD degree from Walden University. Later, Els completed a post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in the School of Medicine at the University of Michigan.

Els informed us that her professional experience has been multi-faceted. She has pursued clinical assignments as an Occupational Therapist, administrative assignments including service as a director of a rehabilitation facility, teaching and lecturing assignments at both Wayne State University and the University of Michigan, and research assignments focusing on methods for health behavior change at the population level. Dr. Nieuwenhuijsen has served in professional roles in the Netherlands, France and the U.S.

Upon her appointment in June, 2006, by the Mayor of the City of Ann Arbor, Els is currently serving a three-year term as a member of the Ann Arbor Commission on Disability Issues. Moreover, Els also currently serves as a member of the Editorial Board for the international journal *Disability and Rehabilitation*.

Els mentioned to us that her interest in the ICF has been influenced by at least two individuals: Karin Schumacher, MPH, PT, currently serving as the Project Manager for the Home Health Quality Initiative at the Colorado Foundation for Medical Care, and Dr. Marijke W. de Kleijn de Vrankrijker, who continues to serve as the Head of the Dutch Collaborating Center within the WHO-FIC Network. Els asserted that she first learned about the *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps* in 1984 from Ms. Schumacher, while Els had been a graduate student at the University of Michigan. Karin and Els entered into numerous conversations about addressing disabilities and secondary conditions as important public health issues. In the 1990s, Karin and Els determined to work toward the founding of a Special Interest Group within the American Public Health Association dedicated to bringing disability issues to the top of our nation's public health agenda. Today, that group is known as the APHA "DisAbility Forum," which has grown in membership to the point where it is currently on the cusp of being formally recognized as a permanent APHA Section.

Regarding her friendship with Dr. de Kleijn, Els mentioned to us that her father, Wim Nieuwenhuijsen, who used a lower leg prosthetic device, initially met Dr. de Kleijn at a professional meeting around 1985. In due course, these ladies struck up both a personal and professional friendship, the latter focused on sharing knowledge about the ICIDH and ICF.

Dr. Nieuwenhuijsen has contributed to the development of the ICF in several ways. For example, she served as an ICF Beta-1 Field Test Coordinator at the University of Michigan test site. Subsequently she contributed clinical input related to the practice of Occupational Therapy within the draft *Procedural Manual and Guide for a Standardized Application of the ICF: A Manual for Health Professionals*, prepared by the American Psychological Association. Els has given many presentations about the ICF at local events and at national and international conferences, including a presentation entitled "The ICF: Promoting Social Change in Fostering Health and Wellness in the Community," delivered at the 13th NACC Conference on the ICF.

Els regularly presents lectures among disability advocacy groups in Michigan about disability resource issues, the ICF, and a holistic approach toward disability in populations. Els has participated regularly as a member of the University of Michigan Initiative on Disability Studies, which strives to expand the degree of diversity at that University by integrating the study of disability into research, scholarship, and teaching there.

Els mentioned to us that her current professional interests involve applying the ICF at the community level, at which the impact might be greater than at national or international levels because of the comparative degree of "modifiability" of barriers at the local level. She is also interested in the art and science of population-level health behavior change strategies. Els enjoys daily walks with neighborhood friends, relaxing candlelit dinners with her husband, Sam Eldersveld, making flower arrangements, and traveling in Europe.

In addition to her scientific, scholarly and civic activities related to disability advocacy and the ICF, Els also has an impressive ICF-oriented publication record, and below this entry, we have entered a short bibliography of some of her contributions to the (ICIDH and) ICF literature. We encourage readers to correspond with Els at either of the following E-Mail addresses:

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