



COLUMN: 100 YEARS OF RADBOUD UNIVERSITY

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While the original name of our beloved university, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen (Catholic University Nijmegen) and its motto, *In Dei nomine feliciter*, are still remnants of the past, the university has made significant progress in its (almost) one hundred years of existence. But I want to start at the beginning: who was the Saint Radboud whose name we so often use? This man lived between the years of 850 and 917 AD, and he was Bishop of the Diocese of Utrecht [1]. He devoted a large part of his life to research, which led to him becoming a patron of Roman Catholic higher education. After all those years, Saint Radboud's name was given to a foundation that would be the origin of the Catholic University Nijmegen, which was eventually founded on 17 October 1923 [2]. In 2004, the name Catholic University Nijmegen was changed to Radboud University, a name that is, also internationally, well-known these days.

Since its founding in 1923, Radboud University has undergone a lot of changes both within and outside the university. A rather impactful event in the history of the university was its temporary closing in April 1943 [2]. At this point during the Second World War, the Rector Magnificus at that time, Bernard Hermesdorf, refused to give students a declaration of loyalty to the German occupying forces. Closing the university indefinitely was inevitable at that moment. The university was also affected by the war battles, as it lost several buildings. For example, the main building located at the Keizer Karelplein had to succumb to bombings in 1944. Moreover, several professors sadly lost their lives during the war. Both Professor Robert Regout and Professor Titus Brandsma were arrested on grounds of resistance activities, and they died in a concentration camp in Dachau. An interesting story about a very special moment of contact between Bernard Hermesdorf and a group of his students, situated in Berlin, during this time, can be found on the website of the university.

A lot has happened behind the doors of the university since 1923. In this edition of RAMS, some of the research that was conducted at Radboud University and Radboud University Medical Center has been highlighted. However, it would be impossible to give credit to all contributions to every field of science that came from researchers at our university here. Next to the research mentioned in articles in this edition, there are many more interesting researchers and departments. Quite a few researchers at our university have been awarded the Spinoza Prize [3]. The Spinoza Prize is a prestigious award, which recognises the exceptional quality of the winner's research and underlines the quality of research that is being conducted at Radboud University. In the medical field, some Spinoza winners are Prof. Dr Peter Hagoort, Prof. Dr Carl Figdor and Prof. Dr Mihai Netea. These awardees span the whole breadth of the medical field, from molecule to man to population. For example, Dr Hagoort is currently a professor in cognitive neuroscience and director of both the Donders Centre for Cognitive Neuroimaging and the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics [4]. His research focuses on the human language system, and he uses a variety of neuroimaging techniques to investigate language and impairments of language in e.g. aphasia, dyslexia and autism. On the other hand, Prof. Dr Figdor is a professor of experimental immunology and he is part of the Department of Tumour Immunology at the Radboud University Medical Center [5]. His research is about molecular mechanisms of antigen-presenting cells, and dendritic cell vaccination as prevention for hereditary cancers, for example [6]. Lastly, Prof. Dr Netea is the head of the division of Experimental Medicine in the Department of Internal Medicine in the Radboud University Medical Center [7]. He is an infectious disease specialist, focusing his research on antifungal immunity, immunodeficiencies in the innate immune system and trained immunity.

Another researcher I would like to highlight is Prof. Dr Tjitske Kleefstra, a principal investigator at the Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behaviour and professor by special appointment in clinical genetics and psychopathology of rare syndromes [8]. She was the first to describe the 9q34 deletion syndrome, which is now known as Kleefstra Syndrome [9, 10]. This is a prime example of the ground-breaking research happening on the Radboud campus.

Looking beyond the field of (medical) science, Radboud University has many alumni that became very successful outside of academia. One could think of Frans Timmermans, politician, diplomat, and the first vice-president of the European Commission, and Gracita Arrindell, the first female president of the parliament of Sint Maarten. Dries van Agt, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands is also an alumnus of Radboud University. Another well-known alumnus is Björn Kuipers, frequently involved in FIFA and UEFA football matches as a referee (although I wonder whether his scientific education has helped him in handling motivated players and passionate supporters).

Looking back on its great history, it is clear that 100 years of Radboud University is definitely something to be celebrated. For an overview of the celebrational activities organised by the university, visit its website, which is also mentioned under 'further reading'. And, with a total of 9302 publications in 2021, and a total of 6427 diplomas earned in that same year, we can be quite sure that the university is running at full steam and that the future of its research is bright [11]!

References

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4. Radboud University, from <https://www.ru.nl/en/people/hagoort-p> [accessed on 27-04-2023]
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8. Radboud University, from <https://www.ru.nl/en/people/kleefstra-t> [accessed on 27-04-2023]
9. From <https://www.kleefstrasynndrome.org/about-dr-kleefstra/> [accessed on 27-04-2023]
10. Kleefstra, T., de Leeuw, N., Kleefstra Syndrome. (2010 Oct 5 [Updated 2023 Jan 26]). In: Adam MP, Mirzaa GM, Pagon RA, et al., editors. GeneReviews. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK47079/>
11. Radboud University, annual report 2021, from <https://annualreport.ru.nl/annualreport/2021-in-facts-and-figures> [accessed on 27-04-2023]

Further reading

1. Dr Brabers, J. (05-05-2020). A postcard from 1943 Radboud University, from <https://www.ru.nl/@1269237/postcard-from-1943/>
2. Activities related to the 100th anniversary of the university, from <https://www.ru.nl/en/about-us/radboud-100-years>