

Analysis of scientific research reveals societal impact of UMCs

The university medical centres of the Netherlands are dedicated to working on better health for everyone. For the health of tomorrow. We accomplish this through our unique combination of research with education and care, and with the support of many intensive collaborations with regional, national and international parties. The analyses in the 'Impact 2015-2018' report reveal that the scientific impact of the UMCs matches that of the top international institutions, but most of all, they confirm that our research affects society as a whole in different ways.

The UMCs believe it is important that the knowledge produced by their research should contribute to new scientific insights and to a healthier and more prosperous society. This report describes that contribution. The analysis was commissioned by the NFU and conducted by Centrum voor Wetenschap en Technologie Studies (CWTS; Centre for science and technology studies) based on the UMCs' scientific publications from the period 2015-2018.

A culture of collaboration

The UMCs are active in a large number of partnerships. They are the 'academic driver' in their own region, foster together a culture of mutual cooperation, and collaborate with many institutions in Europe and the rest of the world. Each UMC has a prominent role in research and is in the same league as top international institutions. The figures in this report present a graphic impression of these networks. Taken as a whole, our UMCs cover a wide range of research topics in the (bio)medical and health sciences fields and in public health. Within that range, each UMC has its own focus and expertise. They complement each other in their diversity.

Sharing knowledge

As UMCs we share our knowledge efficiently and readily. The added value of this was proven recently during the COVID-19 crisis. Open Science is another important goal that we strive for strongly and monitor. Its focus lies on free access to research results and optimal reuse of study data. Of the scientific publications produced by the UMCs in 2018, no less than 70% was accessible online. The NFU participates in national partnerships – including with the VSNU – which means more publications will increasingly be better accessible earlier.

Applying knowledge

The UMCs' research initiates technological innovations and tests them in practice. For example, our research contributes to the general knowledge about healthy living and provides input for government decisions. We also consider it significant that this knowledge ends up in clinical guidelines and treatment protocols and/or innovations both inside and outside the hospital. Last but not least, it is important that society can take advantage of our knowledge. Therefore, in this analysis, we also looked at the translation of our scientific knowledge in specific guidelines, policy documents and news media.