

STEM CAREER SHEET

Career Title

Career profile presented by:



Leonie Abbink (Donor physician in training, Stichting Matchis)

My name is Leonie Abbink and I work as a donor physician (in training) at Stichting Matchis, stem cell donor bank of The Netherlands. I have studied Biomedical Sciences (Bachelor's) and the Selective Utrecht Medical Master (SUMMA, Master's in Medicine and Biomedical Sciences) at Utrecht University. In my job as donor physician at Stichting Matchis I ensure a safe and responsible stem cell donation process.



OVERVIEW OF THE JOB

I am a medical doctor (MD), specifically in training to become a donor physician. As donor physicians we contribute to the safety of donors and recipients of body materials - blood, (stem) cells, tissues and organs. We ensure that the donation process is safe and responsible, guarantee quality and monitor fair distribution. All of our guidelines are based on (bio)medical scientific research as conducted by (medical) doctors and (biomedical) scientists. During our education and in our job as donor physician we have to continually study this research, assess clinical relevance and implement in our guidelines as necessary.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU

There is not one specific person that inspired me during my career. However, there are several members of my family that (have) worked in health care, so I grew up knowing how important these jobs are. During my secondary school years I found out I really liked biology, especially human biology. This inspired me to study Biomedical Sciences and later on Medicine.



TYPICAL WORKING DAY

During my typical working day I start with checking my email and the general mailbox of our medical service (all donor physicians working at Matchis). Usually I will have one or two medical examinations of potential stem cell donors. First, I will have an extensive conversation with the potential donor in which I discuss the advantages and disadvantages of stem cell donation and possible side effects in the long term. Also, blood pressure and urine are tested and a heart film and lung photo are made. During the following hours I will analyse the results that come in from the examination(s). In between the examinations there are several other tasks, including assessing medical questionnaires from potential donor matches, answering emails from transplantation centres (in The Netherlands and abroad), and evaluating follow up laboratory results from donor who have already donated their stem cells.



STUDY & CAREER PATH

In secondary school I continually wanted to know the 'why' of certain biological processes; how do they work, why do they work like that, how do diseases develop? Therefore, I started with a Bachelor's in Biomedical Sciences to learn about physiology and pathology of human life, and how to do research in these areas. However, during my Bachelor's I also found out I really liked the interaction with patients, and I wanted to have a more direct impact on the lives of these patients than only by doing research. So I continued with the Master's in both Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (SUMMA). After my medicine study, I worked in the internal medicine department of Rijnstate hospital (Arnhem, The Netherlands) for about a year. During this time I found out that working in the hospital was not the right fit for me, looked at organisations outside of the hospital and came across Stichting Matchis. I applied for a job, and from there entered the 'specialist' training. I wouldn't change a thing of my career path as it all has taught me a lot about the work of a scientist, medical doctor and about myself.



KEY SKILLS

Collaboration: you work together in a team with donor coordinators and other (non-medical) employees of the organisation, with stem cell collection centre employees, but also with case managers and transplant centres all over the world.

Social skills: you have to communicate in a professional and accurate manner with donors, colleagues, and other stakeholders in the chain of stem cell donation.

(Personal) responsibility: a donor physician has medical responsibility for the whole of the donation process, including safety of the donor and (partly) the recipient.

Critical thinking: separate main from side issues from anamnesis, physical and additional examinations and weigh interests with regards to donor safety and safety of body materials.

(Medical) ethical thinking: due to ongoing research and technological advancements in the (donor) medicine field, ethical thinking makes sure we stay on the right (health promoting) path.

Adaptability/flexibility: during the day urgent and/or unexpected situations can arise with regards to problems during donation, donor complications, logistical/planning problems that you have to tackle.



CAREER PROSPECT

Research/science, medicine (in and outside of hospitals), pharmaceutical industry, consulting, business, and much more.



CHALLENGES

I think one of the main challenges in my job is to keep overview over all the tasks that are assigned to you during the day (mail correspondence, donor examination, assessment of questionnaires, etc.), and to have appropriate time management. Also, sometimes it's challenging to keep a healthy work-life balance.



YOUR ADVICE TO STUDENTS

Stay curious! If you find a field of study/work that you like, try to meet as many people as possible that work in that field and ask them why they do what they do. Eventually, you will find the job you're looking for.



YOUR ADVICE TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Mainly by letting them do their own research into what they like, try not to do too much 'steering'.



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The STEM Alliance is an international initiative, gathering frontline Industry partners and coordinated by European Schoolnet, that brings together Industries, education stakeholders and Ministries of Education to promote STEM education and careers to young Europeans and to address anticipated future skills gaps within the European Union. To address these issues, the STEM Alliance coordinates concerted actions to 1) Make STEM subjects and careers more attractive; 2) Explore and support innovative practices in STEM teaching.



Scientix has received funding from the European Union's H2020 research and innovation programme – project Scientix 4 (Grant agreement N. 101000063), coordinated by European Schoolnet (EUN).

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The SEER receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe programme project The SEER (Grant agreement: 101058569) coordinated by European Schoolnet (EUN).

The overarching objective of the SEER project is to provide a set of roadmaps that will pave the way for the policy and institutional changes necessary for the large-scale implementation and mainstreaming of STE(A)M education in Europe. The project will synthesise the status of STE(A)M Education and evaluate gaps in European policies and initiatives while analysing the needs of teachers and schools to support the design of a set of milestones and strategies for key stakeholders, including policymakers, school decision makers, teachers, and industry

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