

## STEM CAREER SHEET

# Career Title

Career profile presented by:



### **ELVIRA BRAND, MEDICAL EDITOR, NATIONAL MS FOUNDATION**

My name is Elvira Brand. I was born in Leiden in the Netherlands, and for my bachelor in Psychobiology at the UvA I moved to Amsterdam where I live now. After my bachelor, I continued with a Master's in neuroscience. Now I work at the Nationaal MS Fonds (National MS Foundation), which is based in Rotterdam.



### **OVERVIEW OF THE JOB**

I am a medical editor, which means I write about medical topics. Currently my team and I are working on a new website for people with multiple sclerosis (MS). The goal of this new platform is to provide people with MS with information about their disease. Articles I write about are for example about symptoms, treatment, how to live with the disease and ongoing research.



### **WHAT INSPIRED YOU**

- I like to create. It feels nice to work on something for a while and then see the end product.
- I wanted to contribute to society. Working in a foundation feels like I'm doing that.
- I am interested in biomedical topics, especially neurological subjects such as MS.



### **TYPICAL WORKING DAY**

I work 24 hours a week. Two days a week I work from home, once a week I travel to Rotterdam (~1,5 hours one way). On an office day, I usually start with catching up with colleagues about their weekend, but also how work is going. Then I usually spend some hours researching the topic I will write about. I think about what information will be useful for people with MS and how to present it in an understandable way. Then we have lunch which is provided by the workplace. In the afternoon I have a meeting with the other editors. We divide tasks and discuss topics we're writing on.



## STUDY & CAREER PATH

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During my masters I did an extra course in consulting. It taught me how to provide expert advice to a company. After I graduated, I decided to do a one-year traineeship with a consulting company. I learned a lot about advising government organizations such as municipalities and schools.

However, I missed neuroscience too much and I also found consulting a little too vague. Therefore I took a gap year which I spent working part time and thinking about what makes me happy. Which is working in a small company, writing, and working on topics that interest me. I told all my friends what I was looking for in a job. One day a friend of mine told me about a job for the diabetes foundation which I did. It was a small job about collecting information of all ongoing diabetes research in the Netherlands. When I was finished, my team moved over to the MS foundation and asked if I wanted to be on board as a medical editor and I said yes.

Even though I did some things (some courses, traineeship) that turned out to be not for me, I am glad I did all those things because I was curious about them and it allowed me to think about what I like and dislike.



## KEY SKILLS

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**Active listening:** we sometimes do meetings with MS patients who tell us what they want to see in the platform. Active listening is crucial.

**Writing:** when I left university, I only knew how to write research articles, but in my job I am learning how to write other kinds of texts as well

**Research:** every article I am writing is a result of a deep-dive into the topic

**Curiosity:** sometimes I'm assigned to a topic that feels 'meh' at first. But then I research it and it comes alive, and then I want to know more and more about it.

**Critical thinking:** there are a lot of claims about certain diets, supplements and lifestyle changes that are supposed to 'cure' MS. However, I always stay critical and have to filter out what has a scientific base and what doesn't.

**Creativity:** the majority of the population has to understand what I'm writing about. Also people without an academic background. Some of the words I want to use are too abstract and complex. Then I have to find a way around it to explain the topic in a simple way.



## CAREER PROSPECT

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Writing for medical websites, journals, etc. I am currently doing a journalism course on Fridays. With this course I can become a science journalist. And for example, work on podcasts, science events, and other things science related. And I still can develop into the scientific field, such as PhD and research assistant.



## CHALLENGES

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To keep the texts suitable for MS patients, and not too complex. Coming from a scientific background, it is actually easier to write in abstract and complex terms, than to write in simple language.



## YOUR ADVICE TO STUDENTS

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Do whatever you like professionally and in your personal life. Only do things because YOU are curious about them and not because it will be good for your CV. If you are like me and you need lots of time resting, spending time with friends and hobbies, then take that time. I know this is a career event, but remember that career isn't everything.



## YOUR ADVICE TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

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Normalize taking time for normal human needs such as resting, doing nothing for the whole day, and spending time on friends, hobby's and self-development.



## LEARN MORE

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Here is the website of the MS foundation <https://nationaalmsfonds.nl/>

And the journalism course I'm doing: <http://journalistiekvooracademici.nl/>

## Supported by



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### GENERAL PARTNERS



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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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