

Jury report Alumnus of the Year 2019

The University of Groningen is proud of our alumni. They are our dearest ambassadors, partners and door to the society. Annually, we distinguish one alumna or alumnus with the title Alumnus of the Year. This title is an expression of appreciation and encouragement. We honour an Alumnus with this title for making a special contribution to society, science, culture, being a source of inspiration to others, and making a difference in society in the future.

Sander de Hosson is the alumnus of the year 2019

Sander de Hosson is a pulmonologist at the Wilhelmina Hospital in Assen. As a medical doctor, his wish is to treat and cure his patients. Yet, de Hosson is also aware that this is not always possible. In some cases, the only thing he can do is to make his patients more comfortable. According to de Hosson, comfort and relief is perhaps the most important act a doctor can give to his patients.

Over the last couple of years, Sander de Hosson developed into an ambassador for palliative care by guiding patients with an incurable illness in their last phase of their life. In his approach, he focuses on attention and time, commitment and customization, for the individual patient.

De Hosson is committed to helping patients have a dignified and graceful final stage of their lives. Together with internist-oncologist Sabine Netters, he published the book 'Problem-oriented thinking in palliative care (2011)'. This book makes medical students aware about the medical and ethical struggles they may face when working with incurable patients. Together with Netter, de Hosson initiated recurring symposia about medical ethics for specialists and general practitioners.

De Hosson wrote a famous series of columns in the Dagblad van het Noorden and the Leeuwarder Courant. The columns were compiled into a book called 'Slotcouplet'. The book is about his thoughts, feelings and acts of the complicated illness he treats. It is about questions like: How far does medical treatment has to go? Do we have to use all medical treatments possible to cure the patient? Is it professional to keep emotional distance? The columns show how to discuss emotional topics in a light-hearted and recognizable way. They also make medical topics accessible and tangible and offer comfort and peace to patients, family members and other involved parties. 'Slotcouplet' has been published in its 12th edition and has been awarded the Best Groningen Book 2019.

His selfless involvement and connection with patients, his commitment to advance teaching techniques, and the openhearted and empathetic way to connect everybody with the medical sector in his columns makes de Hosson a meaningful source of inspiration for society; especially for current and future medical students. We are proud to award him with the prestigious title Alumnus of the Year 2019.

For the first time a medical doctor and alumnus of the UMCG is honoured with the title Alumnus of the Year; this is unique in these Covid-19 times. Giving the title to Sander de Hosson, is also a sign of our immense appreciation for all medical staff.

About Sander de Hosson

Sander de Hosson (Utrecht, 1977) studied medicine at the University of Groningen from 1995 to 2003, and specializes in pulmonology. He became well known with his poignant newspaper columns about patients in palliative care. The columns were later compiled in Slotcouplet (2018), which was voted the Best Groningen Book 2019 in the category non-fiction. His efforts for palliative care patients were honoured with the Global Lung Cancer Award from the Global Lung Cancer Coalition (GLCC), an umbrella organization of patient

organizations worldwide. In 2019 he also received the biennial Elisabeth Kübler-Ross medal from the Voluntary Palliative Terminal Care.

The jury

The jury for the prize Alumnus of the Year consisted of:

Cisca Wijmenga, Rector Magnificus, chairman

Merel Rumping, social entrepreneur, Alumnus of the Year 2016

Oscar Couwenberg, dean Spatial Sciences

Remco Kouwenhoven, director of Alumni Relations & Fundraising / Ubbo Emmius Fund

About the Alumnus of the Year award

Since 2009, the University of Groningen has given the Alumnus of the Year award to a unique former student annually. The award is an expression of appreciation as well as encouragement to a former student who:

- has made a special contribution to society, science, sports or culture;
- is a source of inspiration for others;
- is a promise for the future (preferably "mid-career").