

University of Groningen

## Exploring new ways of measuring the economic value of vaccination with an application to the prevention of rotaviral disease

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Those who know me well shouldn't be surprised that at the end I tumbled into the world of vaccines and vaccination because of my fascination for cows and for the different types that exist and graze across the world. Visiting a new country I will immediately investigate two things: identifying the local type of cow if there is one around and finding a museum of local modern art. There is no link between both, but it identifies 2 of my 3 passions. The third one I will reveal at the end of this acknowledgement.

Meanwhile the link between vaccines and cows seems obvious. What is less clear is the ensuing development that I should jump on economics of vaccines and ending writing a doctoral thesis on the subject. Two facts have helped me moving towards that direction at a more mature age. First and foremost were the regular contacts at congresses and the many exchanges of emails and information with a gentle and a very patient academician, working in the north of Holland, who was utterly convinced that I should and could do it. I would like to thank wholeheartedly my promotor, Prof Dr MJ Postma for pushing me over the edge to get where I stand now with a doctoral thesis. Without his help and commitment, I would have been unable to finish this work. It is very gracious of him that he embarked in this adventure with me. We made it and I really enjoyed the whole process of elaborating and finishing this research. With professor Postma and with my co-promotor, Prof Dr O Ethgen about whom I was so glad to get him on board as well, I was able to pursue this work during a 3 year period. The support of Olivier at the end was extremely precious. His way of giving advice was so tactful and 'aimable', typically 'à la française'. A great thank you to both of you.

My appreciation about this entire effort is that it is absolutely worth doing it, for me personally as well as for my direct environment I'm working with. It helps so much to scrutinize on the one hand and to synthesize on the other the many ideas we all have in our heads bringing it back to a clear and simple reasoning that allow moving to new evidence. I would recommend this effort to everyone who has the possibility/opportunity to do it. Age shouldn't be a limiting factor. It rather is an asset as time gives the chance to get a better and deeper grip on the subject and helps selecting the priority in the work to be done. And that was the second factor that motivated me for defending a thesis. There were/are new facts and figures to communicate about the health economics of vaccines that should attract the attention of a broad audience so that the product has now a better position about its right economic value which we didn't discover so well yet. I consider this thesis as a helping tool in a process towards the right economic assessment of vaccines, where still much needs to be done to capture it fully.

This brings me to the second part of my acknowledgement. I have been blessed during my early career to be directed and to receive support by deeply inspiring figures and tutors such as Prof Dr W Eyllenbosh (†), Prof Dr L Denis, Prof Dr M Lechat (†), Prof Dr P Boyle, Prof Dr P Piot, Dr V Nelen amongst many others. They

gave me the right introduction into the world of epidemiology in Belgium, Europe, Africa (Burundi), and Latin America (Suriname). But then suddenly came the switch from epidemiology to economics and another unique group of persons pushed me forward into that new field and into the world of vaccines such as Dr K Torfs, Dr A Alwan, Dr H Erder, and now Prof Dr M Toumi, Prof Dr M. Raes, Dr M Connolly and last but not least Dr J Mauskopf. I am sure that I'm missing many more names on that list and I hope that those not mentioned here will forgive me. Such a list can never be comprehensive but many have helped and inspired me in the work I'm doing now and I would like to express my greatest gratitude for all the support, I received.

Finally there are two groups of people always very close to my heart that may remain so for ever. First, there is that unique team of health economists at GSK Vaccines, with its large network of external experts, with whom I debated a lot during the many meetings we have had over the past 10 years. As a person in charge of leading the department it was easy to organise meetings –not mandatory- but the debate I had with you all was always lively, straight, clear, fresh, challenging, and so helpful for my thinking. Thank you so much to all the Nadias (3), Gen, Rachel, Meghann, Emmanuelle, Katsia, Xiao, Emma, Sharon, Carole, Carla, Danielle, Ilse, Laure-Anne, but also Christophe, Des, Nicolas, Jorge, Rodrigo, Jean-Etienne, Lijoy, Augustin, Stephan, Oscar for creating such a stimulating environment. Three more persons remain to be mentioned here, and they are special. Georges, he has been my 'compagnon de route' for more than 15 years now in the world of health economics. I could always count on him whenever and wherever I am/was with very memorable events in Scotland, in Lyon, le Concorde, or in the open office now at GSK. It is always so nice that when meeting people again after a long period, they always gently and spontaneously ask me about Georges. The work he did and how he did it impressed many. The next person I like to thank here is Nathalie. She is the one who always helps whenever the day moves to a next disaster. Her smile, good temper, and unique network always helped the bad mood on Monday morning and she knows me better for that than myself. It is so good to know that this team is like a second family to me. If I still do the job I'm doing today it is because of you: you have always been so nice to me, so responsive, so helpful. Thank you so much for all that great support. The last person to mention in that GSK list is my current boss, Thomas Breuer, who remained curious but much enthusiastic about all the work we initiated in our health economic group. In big organisations like GSK it is critical to have leaders in place in which one can trust and discuss openly. Thomas is such a person. Many thanks for your great support.

The last group to mention is the one I missed most when I'm travelling on Friday evening and I cannot attend our known rendez-vous in the restaurant 'Den Uil', my family, my wife and our two boys, Bruno and Eric. These gatherings are so precious to me and to Carole as well. The debates, the jokes, the fun, but sometimes the 'tristesse' or the simple presence of being together, the one family event, is such a stimulating force for me and Carole at the end of tiresome weeks. I hope I didn't cause too many headaches with my focus on cows, paintings, cauliflowers, drone stories, wishes to help changing the world, and ways to see too much the universe

through health economic glasses with models. But I thought it is good to know that your father is passionate about his work. His work was and is his greatest hobby. But the last who deserves most attention of gratitude here is my wife, Carole. This year we will officially be 30 years together, 30 years of great adventure, 30 years of great support in all what I'm doing, and the blessing of being there when I needed it most. Many thanks for all that free giving that we enjoy so much together most during our bird watching walks, my third passion she generously introduced it to me, more than 30 years ago. I was then discovering that a duck is not a duck, but can be a Shelduck, a Mallard, a Teal, a Gadwall, a Wigeon, a Pintail, a Shoveler, a Pochard, and many more beautiful species with impossible names to remember in different languages. To all of you a 'very big' thank you that you gave me the chance to develop and finish this thesis.