Acknowledgements
Acknowledgements

It’s been a privilege for me to live and work for the last 4 years in the Netherlands, and to enjoy the level of support, positivity and creativity among my colleagues that I have. When I first arrived, the challenge of working in a new health care system on new subject matter in a different language all seemed a bit insurmountable. However, with the enthusiasm and encouragement of colleagues (now friends), I’ve learned that step-by-step, everything is possible...well almost!! Thanks particularly to the following people:

To my co-promoters, Anneke and Gerard: From the first day when they interviewed me (and though I wasn't entirely sure what I was signing up for at the time!), they have been endlessly supportive. They are both passionate guardians of public health in Amsterdam, always questioning and full of ideas. Again and again, research within the department has helped to inform local and national infection control policy and led to tangible changes in practice. It is a credit to their perseverance and commitment, and it has been a real pleasure and inspiration to work with them.

To my promoter, Martien, who from the outset supported my Ph.D. candidacy. He responded to draft manuscripts so quickly and always with razor sharp insight. I thank him for always being so approachable and ready to offer advice.

No research is possible without cooperation and teamwork and I would like to thank all my co-authors and the many individuals who were willing to share their time and expertise. Within the GGD, I would like to thank my fellow doctors, Gini, Floor, Femke and Sanne, from whom I am learning all the time. Not just about medicine, but about life, love, good coffee....and Dutch grammar!! Particular thanks to Floor, whose help with translation was invaluable. To Dorothé and all the nurses and doctors assistants in infectious disease control and the travel clinic, and the staff of LCR: for their collegiality, their patience with my unique Dutch/English blend, and of course their longstanding commitment to research. To my co-author Lian, whose experience, openness and guidance were very much appreciated. Thanks also to Maarten Schim van der Loeff and Ronald Geskus who were always willing to assist with statistical advice when I needed it (it helped maintain my sanity).

My story in the Netherlands begins of course in RIVM, where there are so many people, without whom, the last 4 years would not have been possible. To Marianne van der Sande who gave me the opportunity to come to RIVM in the first place, thus opening up to me the world of infectious disease epidemiology; To Wim van der Hoek, Hester de Melker and Wilfred van Pelt who
welcomed me into their teams, encouraged me to get involved and were always willing to offer advice. Also to Hein Boot, with whom it was a special privilege to have worked.

To my fellow EPIETers/ EUPHEMers at RIVM: Harold Noel (the STATA king!), Marc Rondy, Katie Greenland, Sabine Dittrich, Barbara Schimmer, Georgia Ladbury, Giovanna Jaramillo Gutierrez, and my EPIET supervisors, Mirna Robert - Du Ry van Beest Holle and Maaike van Veen: It is a tangled web we weave! I know our paths will always cross and there'll always be time for rosé in the sun somewhere! To my office mates and colleagues—Ewout, Remko, Rolf and particularly Sabine de Greeff, who made it all great fun. When in doubt, there's always chocolate! Finally, to Roel Coutinho, without whom, I don't think I would have made my way eventually to the GGD.

To my paranymphs: Susan Hahné has been both a friend and mentor since the very start. Her thoughtful integrity and willingness to be a support to the EPIET fellows both personally and professionally is inspiring. From dodgy taxis in Kazakhstan to running around Rome (literally), it's been a great fun and a real adventure. I hope we'll share many more. And Sanne Belderok, with whom I shared so many laughs at the GGD, often over “the y axis of life”, which leads too often from order to chaos. Remember: deviation is standard and quite acceptable!!

To all those at home who enabled me from the very outset to pursue this career path: my colleagues in Public Health in Ireland who, through the Specialist Registrar Training Programme, gave me every opportunity to explore public health at local, regional, national and international level during my training, and supported (and continue to support) the EPIET programme. I hope that I can give back some of the time, commitment and energy that you invested in me and in my training.

Finally, to my family and friends who have shaped who I am. To my parents, Noreen and Tim, who always gave me the freedom and support to choose my own path; and my husband, Richard, who shared wholeheartedly in this adventure.