
Preface

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It is a pleasure and an honour to have the chance to participate to this tribute to Professor Koos Krabbendam.

I have known Koos for only a few years. I knew, of course, of his scientific work and the extraordinary job he had done with Prof. Elie Geisler in creating the Healthcare Technology Management Association (HCTM) and its journal, the *International Journal of Healthcare Technology and Management*. Elie and Koos have opened a new scientific and academic field, giving scholars, managers and professionals from different backgrounds a common 'playground' to meet and exchange ideas. This is a remarkable result because it is very difficult to make people speaking different scientific languages understand each other; it requires vision, constancy, and patience, as it takes time to see the first pay-offs. Koos and Elie have succeeded in this challenging task! I had the opportunity to hear from them the story of when, in the late '90s, on the porch of Elie's house in Evanston, they developed this idea. From that (very nice!) porch, they have unified the two sides of the ocean, enriching the issues studied with the perspectives and the experiences – sometime very different – of the *old* and the *new worlds*. In the past few years, I also had the opportunity to learn first hand with Elie and Koos how magic and snug that porch is...

I worked with Koos in the organisation of the annual Hospital of the Future Conference hosted by my university, the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, in Pisa, in October 2007. The HCTM Association gave me this prestigious but at the same time difficult duty: to serve as host/organiser of the annual conference. It was a year-long demanding and exciting work, but Elie, Koos and other colleagues gave me fundamental help. It was during that year leading up to the conference in Pisa that I had the chance to work more closely with Koos and to learn from him precious lessons. Koos, being the co-founder of HCTM and the key person for Europe, shared with me the responsibility in the organisation of the conference.

He came to Pisa several times to see the venue and discuss all the scientific and organisational issues. He wanted to talk about any little and *apparently* insignificant detail... he asked me about 'this and that', 'what if', and 'after that', and 'before that', and 'everything'! I must confess, any time he came it was like an exam! I also thought that he must have had previous bad experiences with Italians!! But I had a *secret weapon*, an *ace in my hole*: a Dutch lady in my team, Daphne, who I deeply involved in the organisation! She helped me a lot in de-codifying Koos's approach: "the Dutch..., we are like this!", she explained to me.

It came out to be a very successful conference, and Koos played a fundamental role in guaranteeing that success, also during the conference itself. But he did that in a beautiful way. He supported and guided me, but as I was the *host* – we were in my university – he wanted me to have the host's visibility and get a formal accreditation in the HCTM scientific community. I deeply appreciated it and I keep this memory in my mind as a precious lesson from him.

After the conference, I had the chance to better know Koos and Pietie, listening to the stories about their children and grandchildren, about their travels, and about their adventurous mountain climbing, and... everything became clear! Koos' attitude toward planning, his attention to minute details, to never leave anything to chance, his being ready for any eventuality... He is right. This is the only way to get to the top of the mountain! Enjoy the next climb, Koos!