

Marlies Bongers (11-03-1957 – 26-10-2025)



Marlies Bongers studied medicine in Groningen and trained as a gynaecologist at the Free University and the Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis both in Amsterdam. In 1990, she became the first female consultant to join the gynecology partnership at St. Joseph Hospital, the later Máxima Medical Center in the Eindhoven area. From there, she obtained her PhD on the subject of heavy menstrual bleeding. Marlies was highly driven to take menstrual complaints out of the taboo. She succeeded in persuading employers to create more space in the workplace for women suffering from menstrual symptoms. At the same time, she wrote together with Corien van Zweden the book "Biography of the Uterus", with which they sought to reach all women experiencing menstrual problems. Marlies listened to these women and was creative in designing research to find solutions, always grounded in her clinical experience. She was an excellent clinician and minimally invasive surgeon and attached the greatest importance to a scientific approach to demonstrate the effectiveness and safety of

procedures. She was a pioneer in the field of women's health, also training her residents in this domain. Until then, the field of benign gynecology was not at the forefront of clinical scientific research, largely due to lack of funding. This did not stop her from initiating research trajectories with many PhD candidates. To finance this work, she established a foundation. In the Netherlands, she introduced the NovaSure technique and conducted research into various methods of global ablation. She was the driving force behind ambulatory hysteroscopy in the Netherlands, including the introduction of the vaginoscopic hysteroscopy and NovaSure under sedation and later using only so-called fundal anesthesia. Her efforts were recognized when she was appointed Professor of Benign Gynecology. In 2015, she delivered her inaugural lecture entitled "The End of the Period".

With her boundless energy and optimism, Marlies inspired many colleagues to collaborate with her and to engage in research. She had her group of "Murder Women"—a group of young researchers who regularly met at her home and, after a meal, discussed their research activities. The name "Murder Women" refers to a Dutch cartoon with the text "Menstruation kills". She was also greatly beloved abroad for her expertise, generous laugh, and inexhaustible energy. She served as a board member of the European Society for Gynaecological Endoscopy (ESGE) and editor of the European Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the journal *Facts, Views and Vision in ObGyn*. With her research team, she delivered numerous presentations over the past 30 years at the annual meetings of ESGE and American Association of Gynecologic Laparoscopists. From 2013 to 2017, she was a section editor of the *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde*. She was rewarded the Els Borst Lifetime Achievement Award in 2022 and a year later she was appointed an Officer of the Order Orange-Nassau by Royal Decree as a "crowning achievement" of her work. Marlies is deeply missed by her PhD students and colleagues, many of whom also developed a close friendship with her. The prospect of a long and vital—cycling—life after her retirement was abruptly ended by a tragic accident. We express our deepest sympathy to her husband, children, grandchildren, and all who loved her.

Sebastiaan Veersema
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