

*Jacob Rotgans, Terschelling 2 January 1859 – Baarn 29 March 1948, was a Dutch physician who specialised in surgery. He became professor and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Amsterdam. In 1913, he was one of the founders of the Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI) and he was the first chairman of the NKI from 1913 to 1924.*

*Rotgans was the son of sea captain Wybrand Geertz Rotgans and Antje Bakker. He was a passionate and experienced sailor and owned a yacht with which he sailed to, among other places, England and Norway.*

*He studied medicine at the University of Amsterdam. In 1882, he won a gold medal for his “Contribution to the knowledge of the neck area- the last four cranial nerves”. He completed his study in 1884 and established himself for some time as physician in Smilde. It is understood that this was to be able to pay off his study debt. He graduated in 1886 cum laude in Amsterdam. In 1890 he left for Groningen where he became assistant to Professor Koch (Professor of Surgery). He gave courses in surgery and published in the literature on subjects such as epispadia, ectiopia vesicae, pancreatic cysts and surgical technique. He also remained in practice until 1900. From 1893 to 1920, Rotgans is professor at the University of Amsterdam. He succeeded his earlier teacher, Jan Willem Reinier Tilanus, as Professor of Surgery. The title of his inaugural lecture was: “On education in surgery and the practice of the physician”.*

*At this time, Rotgans published many articles in “Het Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde” (Dutch medical journal) concerning among other things, osteomyelitis, bile duct surgery, gastric surgery and peritonitis. He wrote a book on surgery of the abdominal organs.*

*In 1907 as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Amsterdam, Rotgans gave a lecture on the cancer question in which he stated that cancer was an disease which was caused by the effect of micro-organisms. He made a plea for the establishment of separate cancer institutes. On 10 October 1913, the Vereniging Het Nederlands Kanker Instituut (NKI, Association of the Netherlands Cancer Institute) was established. The NKI opened its laboratory and clinic in 1915 under the name Antoni van Leeuwenhoekhuis at Keizersgracht 706 in Amsterdam..*

*Professor Rotgans was elected the first chair of the Netherlands Cancer Institute until the end of 1924.*

*He was director of the Amsterdam division of the Red Cross in the Netherlands.*

*In 1920, after his retirement as Professor, he travels to the Dutch East Indies to advocate the establishment of an institute for research and treatment of cancer. This leads in 1923 to the opening of the “Nederlands Indisch Kanker Instituut” (Netherlands East Indies Cancer Institute) in the city of Bandung on Java.*

#### **Sources::**

- *NTvG 92, II, 15. 10 april 1948, p1050-1052 “In memoriam prof. dr. Jacob Rotgans” (Dutch)*
- *NTvG 78, II, 20. 19 mei 1934, p2253 “Gouden artsjubileum professor Rotgans” (Dutch)*
- *“De som van zorg en onderzoek”, door Bas van Lier, uitgave NKI-AVL bij het 90j jubileum. B. van Lier, “De som van zorg en onderzoek”, published in 2004 by NKI-AVL on the occasion of its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary. (Dutch)*