

[00:03:12.01] - Video Voice-Over

6 years after the pandemic, one of medicine's greatest puzzles remains unsolved. COVID. Long COVID. One of many post-acute infection syndromes. It's a puzzle too complex for any single field to solve, but one we must solve because you and I will likely face it again. Millions of people have lost their lives, and millions more have lost their health and livelihoods, still waiting for answers. Solving it will take all of us: scientists, doctors, industry, policymakers, and patience. So we urge you, join lion-hearted science united against PAIS.

[00:04:15.20] - Rob Wüst

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the chair of the ISLC-PAIS Conference, Rob Wüst. Good afternoon, everyone, friends, family, colleagues, and a warm welcome to Amsterdam and to this 2026 ISLC-PAIS Conference. I will get back to this abbreviation later. It's really wonderful to see so many of you, and some of you have traveled from super far away, from Australia, the United States, Canada, South Africa, and from countries all across Europe. Some of you have probably spent way more time traveling here than I prepared my speech. But then of course there are also people that live around the corner who just simply got on their bikes. But whether you traveled 20,000 or just 5, welcome here. Thanks for making an effort. Thank you for all the work that you've done, um, for coming— before coming here. The science that will be presented here takes an enormous amount of time and effort. Experiments, clinical studies, patient cohorts, data analysis, long discussions, failed experiments, revised manuscripts, grant applications, failed grant applications, and probably too far too many late nights. But this is what we all bring together, the science. People here also come from completely different backgrounds: immunology, cardiology, neurology, infectious diseases, rehabilitation and exercise science, vascular biology, metabolism, and so on.

[00:06:05.18] - Rob Wüst

And that's exactly what we need, because Long COVID, ME, and other post-infectious— post-acute infection syndromes will not be solved by one person, one discipline, one lab, one country, or one simple idea. It requires us to connect together. So let's talk together. Use the coffee breaks, use the lunch breaks, use the poster sessions. Talk to each other that you don't— people that you don't know, or talk to presenters that may have a great idea. Discuss new results. That's exactly what we are here in a scientific in-person meeting, and it should be like this. I also want to particularly welcome the patients and patient representatives. For many patients, simply attending a conference is an enormous effort, and we are very aware of this. We're grateful that the— that you're here and that you contribute to the knowledge and experience that you are having, giving us. We've spent considerably time and effort on CO2 sensors and indoor air filtering systems, and there are dedicated resting rooms for those who need them. Please use them when you, when you need them. There is a telephone number as well on the screen that you can call in case. Patient involvement is not something separate of the science that we do.

[00:07:30.23] - Rob Wüst

It helps us asking better questions. Recognizing what is really important. So thank you for being here. You're here in an art museum, and we had to have an art exhibition as well. So look around here on the walls. You'll see artwork that is made by patients. We're super— we're extremely proud that these artworks can be displayed in the museum here. And the conference magazine that you should have received has further information about this. There's also a catalog in the back, in the back corner, if you're interested. Over the coming days, there will be 3 parallel rooms with biomedical, clinical, but also impact-related sessions. That unfortunately means that you have to choose. So don't go to the session that you always know, but maybe go a little bit outside your comfort zone. We specifically wanted this conference to be a place where you feel comfortable presenting new and unpublished data. That is important to move the science forward. So please respect that openness of sharing unpublished data. Only use photos of slides for your personal information and do not publish slides of presentations online, particularly on social media, unless there is a specific explicit request from the presenters.

[00:09:09.13] - Rob Wüst

But of course, tell the world that you're here. Tell us how much you like the conference, but just be careful with the unpublished work. At the same time, we know that there are many people who could

not be physically here in this room. Some live on the other side of the world, could not travel, travel costs may be problematic. And that's why the scientific committee decided also to have a video-on-demand option. So there is also a specific patient recap session on Saturday afternoon. For the video-on-demand, speakers will be asked— will have control over what can be made available. At this video-on-demand platform. If your presentation contains unpublished, confidential, or sensitive data, you can indicate which parts need to be taken out. There's no livestream also. That's very good to know. The videos are not being livestreamed immediately. For the speakers, you will receive further information about this. For the patient recap session, there will be small teams of researchers, clinicians, and patients going through the program on these— on the subsequent days to identify key findings that they feel are important for patients. These highlights for the conference will form the basis of this patient recap session where the most important developments will be shared in short discussions, interviews, and contributions from speakers.

[00:10:40.15] - Rob Wüst

And the aim is simply, what does all this science mean for patients. So we hope that in this way we can also connect the scientific program with patient perspectives and key— and share key messages from the conference to the wider public. Now I should explain this long abbreviation that we put all around the building. ISLC-PAIS stands for the International Society for Long COVID and Post-Acute Infection Syndromes. Because we want the conference to be part of something bigger, building an international scientific and clinical community around Long COVID and post-infection syndromes that is specifically also for scientists. On Saturday morning, there will be a dedicated keynote session about this, so I will not provide more information right here, but please come to the Saturday morning session. Now, a conference does not organize itself. There is a lot of people behind the scenes. So we have an organizing committee, scientific committee that you see on the screen here. And many of them are here today. Or actually, all of them are here today. Please talk to the people behind the staff if you need any information. Thank you also to the abstract committee for reviewing abstracts. Inviting the speakers, build— and building the program.

[00:12:06.10] - Rob Wüst

We received more than 185 abstracts. So particularly the abstract committee, we'd like to thank particularly for helping out. Of course, I also like to thank already upfront the people who work behind the scenes, the staff, volunteers, technical staff at the back here, and all the people who are helping to go get us through these coming days. We're also extremely grateful for the— yes, then I have to work— for the sponsors. So the sponsors that have been able to sponsor this conference. This includes organizations such as The Netherlands ME/CFS Cohort and Biobank, the ME/CFS Alliance, who also organized the summer school that happened yesterday and this morning. Today. Solve M.E., CODA, Stichting Long COVID, various patient organizations, Aranet for the CO2 sensors, and all of them that are on the screen here. Thank you very much for your— for making this helpful, making this a success. There are just a few practical things before we start. First, please wear your badge during the conference. When you're inside the venue. That helps us identifying who's part of the venue, part of the conference, who's part of the museum. Secondly, there is also a limited amount of tickets still available for the canal and dinner tour on Friday night, so please get in touch if you're interested.

[00:13:37.23] - Rob Wüst

Over the next few days, we will get together here and share new ideas, challenge ideas respectfully, and talk to each other. I wish you a fantastic conference, lots of new ideas, and very good discussion and new collaborations. So welcome to Amsterdam.