

“QUALITY ASSURANCE SHOULD BE MORE VISIBLE AS A CAREER OPPORTUNITY”

Heleen Kessels explains why

It was never Heleen Kessels' dream to become a quality assurance officer in a biotech. Largely because she simply never knew this type of position existed. According to Heleen, that needs to change. “Because this job is a lot of fun and super meaningful.”

“What I wanted to become when I was young?” Heleen stops and thinks for a moment. “I never had a really clear vision on that, frankly. In school, I admired my class mates who had crystal clear goals. But personally, I always made decisions based on my interests and made good use of opportunities on my path.”

This approach directed her into studying medical biology. “At university, focus is to be prepared for a research career and become a professor,” Heleen continues. “But by the end of my studies, I discovered that wasn’t going to make me happy.”

Quality assurance is underrepresented in universities

Instead, Heleen is now a quality assurance team leader at Neuroplast. “I never really heard of quality assurance as a career opportunity,” Heleen states. “This field is very underrepresented in universities and at career fairs.”

This invisibility is a missed opportunity, Heleen believes: “The job is super fun. And very meaningful.”

As quality assurance team leader, it’s Heleen’s responsibility to ensure that Neuroplast complies with all relevant regulations and protocols. “We produce a so-called ATMP, Advanced Therapy Medicinal Product. Furthermore, our stem cell product is manufactured under GMP, Good Manufacturing Practice. This means there are many rules we need to follow.” Compliance to these rules gives authorities and patients confidence and proof that Neuroplast’s ATMP is produced according to the highest safety standards.



Heleen Kessels

NEURO-CELLS® IS A LIVING THERAPY SUPPORTED BY GROWING CLINICAL EVIDENCE

Neuroplast is a clinical stage stem cell biotech combatting the common cellular processes in neurodegenerative diseases. Neurodegenerative diseases include traumatic spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury and frontotemporal dementia.

Clarity on rules and processes

Heleen helps provide the necessary structures throughout the organization to reach this compliance efficiently. "Neuro-Cells® is a revolutionary product that follows a different approach than other stem cell therapies," Heleen clarifies. Neuroplast does not manipulate, genetically engineer or culture stem cells, but eliminates cells that could counteract the desired effect and leaves the remaining cells untouched.

"I help to deliver clarity on that and help to make sure we follow the procedures correctly."

"There are many grey areas when applying rules," the Limburgian adds. "I help to deliver clarity on that and help to make sure we follow the procedures correctly."

All actions that take place in the laboratory, for example, are signed off on applicable documents. Heleen and her team check those documents. And if anything should go wrong, they are equipped with relevant information to get to the bottom of it. Heleen: "Thorough documentation helps us to correct where needed and to prevent mistakes."

Even before boxes can be checked and procedures can be followed, Heleen is involved: "When we establish new processes or change existing ones, everything needs to be thought through in detail. We must be certain that unforeseen side effects cannot occur."

The quality domain, therefore, is very broad. "We oversee everything", the quality officer concludes.

The significance of offering perspective to patients

The goal is to bring safe and effective stem cell therapies to people with neurodegenerative diseases - another perk of the job, in Heleen's opinion. "We are now running a Phase II clinical trial with patients that suffer from traumatic spinal cord injury. When you really think about it, this condition is pretty hopeless. There is no cure and on top of that, patients and society have to bear a lot of costs for all kinds of care they need every single day of their lives. It feels really

significant to contribute to a solution and a better perspective on life for these patients."

Personally, Heleen has dreams too. "I either want to grow into an expert role, or a management role." Although Heleen hasn't decided yet, she sees opportunities for both in Neuroplast as the company is growing and developing. "I've been working here for more than four years, and since then, the number of employees has doubled."

We perform together

Despite Neuroplast's growth, Heleen still appreciates its start-up vibe: "Before I joined Neuroplast, I worked as clean room operator in a very large biotech. Every department focused on their own tasks and responsibilities. Some people would check equipment, others would check deviations from manufacturing procedures, and so forth."

A big difference to Neuroplast, where everyone contributes to multiple stages in the process. Heleen: "All of us have a wide range of tasks. I know what other teams are doing. There is a lot of transparency and I can always ask others for help if I need it. It really feels like we perform together."

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WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Neuroplast is always looking for new talent, clinical partners, and investors to accelerate realizing our mission: Using stem cell technology to regenerate futures.

Contact us via info@neuroplast.com or follow us on LinkedIn