

Biography



Professor Osterhaus started his career in Utrecht (The Netherlands) where he graduated with distinction at the faculty of veterinary sciences. In 1978 he received his PhD degree with Prof. Horzinek. He then moved to the RIVM in Bilthoven, where he stayed until 1994. Since then, he has been working at Erasmus MC in Rotterdam. Thirty years of experience in animal and human virology have resulted in a specific interest in viruses that ordinarily affect only animals but that can cross the species barrier. He is now a leading authority, able to identify dangerous and elusive new viruses with speed and precision. His team reacted with exceptional speed to the SARS outbreak of 2003 and identified the responsible coronavirus within days. This allowed the WHO to effectively diagnose and isolate suspected cases immediately and in part as a direct result of Osterhaus' determination, passion and commitment, SARS was brought under control and countless lives were saved. In 1997 he and his team silenced skeptics when they proved that Avian Influenza (H5N1) could be transmitted to humans.

Based on the discovery professor Osterhaus has enabled health authorities to prepare for potential outbreaks, and, as an individual, has campaigned determinedly for awareness, calling for a global taskforce to prepare for and combat viruses such as H5N1. Throughout his professional career, Osterhaus and his team have identified around twenty 'new' viruses (such as the human metapneumovirus, hMPV and a novel human coronavirus, HCoV-NL) as well as countless new possible hosts. His research includes studies on virus reservoirs in wildlife, mechanisms of transmission and pathogenesis of zoonotic viruses. In addition, innovative fundamental research on the natural and vaccine-induced immune response and on antiviral drugs is performed to combat the threat posed by (zoonotic) virus infections. As part of his tireless active interest in public health, Osterhaus has acted as PhD mentor for ~40 students, written over 700 academic articles, created biotech companies and held several editorial positions. The continuous and groundbreaking work of the so-called 'virus hunter' has helped prevent and control the spread of deadly viruses and will continue to do so, saving countless lives and changing the face of world health today.

