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Working as a researcher within the medical laboratory Erna Lenters-Westra received the Westgard Award during the Quality in the Spotlight conference 2018 in Antwerp on Monday 19th March. A prestigious award presented every two years by Dr. James O. Westgard to someone who has made a mark on quality in medical laboratories. Mrs. Lenters-Westra, PhD received the prize for her outstanding work and research into the quality of HbA1c measuring methods in the blood of diabetes patients. Her research compelled manufacturers to adjust their equipment. After all, doctors completely rely on this equipment to treat their patients.



Mrs. Erna Lenters-Westra, PhD receives the Westgard Award
from Dr. James O. Westgard in Antwerp

Investigation of equipment

Erna Lensters-Westra is a research fellow at the Clinical Chemical Laboratory of Isala Clinics. She conducts research into equipment (bulk analysis devices but also the small point of care POC meters) that measure the HbA1c in the blood of diabetic patients. Thanks to her research, it became clear that a lot of equipment is not properly calibrated.



Accuracy not expected will cause diagnostics problems

“That's just another health risk,” explains Mrs. Erna Lenters-Westra, PhD. “HbA1c shows the average blood glucose value over the past six to eight weeks. This is an important predictor of possible complications. Most health care providers use this value to decide whether or not to recommend patients to change their treatment. When measuring the HbA1c value does not provide the expected accuracy, this can lead to an over- or under-estimation of the number of people with the disease. Moreover the degree of disruption in people with diabetes can also be over-estimated or under-estimated. ”

New standards

With her scientific papers she compelled the manufacturers to improve their analytical methods. She also set the limits for manufacturers with new HbA1c methods. Reason for Dr. Westgard to present the award to Mrs. Erna Lenters-Westra this time. A nice recognition for her outstanding work. Mrs. Lenters-Westra previously obtained her PhD for this research at the University of Groningen.