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ASPI honors Erasmus MC Urology Department for global leadership in Active Surveillance research

Rotterdam team recognized for foundational work that helped make careful monitoring a trusted option for men with low-risk prostate cancer

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands, June 17, 2026 — Active Surveillance Patients International (ASPI), a nonprofit patient education and advocacy organization, has named the Urology Department at Erasmus MC in Rotterdam, Netherlands, as a recipient of its 2026 Special Award for Research and Advocacy.

The award recognizes the department's foundational contributions to prostate cancer screening, Active Surveillance research, and safer, more personalized monitoring for men with low-risk prostate cancer.

Among those being honored are Monique Roobol, PhD, who leads the Urological Research Group at Erasmus MC and has been a principal investigator with PRIAS from the start; Chris Bangma, MD, now retired, a longtime PRIAS board member; and Fritz Schröder, MD, now retired, founder of PRIAS and a pioneering figure in prostate cancer screening research.

"This award from ASPI is especially meaningful because it comes from the patients themselves," Roobol said. "Ultimately, all of our research at Erasmus exists for one reason — to help men like the members of ASPI live longer, better lives with less unnecessary treatment."

Helping turn Active Surveillance into a global standard

Erasmus MC has played a central role in major international work in prostate cancer screening and Active Surveillance, including ERSPC, PRIAS, and GAP3. Its researchers helped define the scale of overdiagnosis, develop practical surveillance protocols, and advance more personalized monitoring strategies, including risk-based models designed to reduce unnecessary biopsies.

The department's work helped turn Active Surveillance from a promising concept into a structured, evidence-based approach used worldwide.

"The work coming out of Erasmus MC has changed the lives of men around the world by helping protect many patients from the side effects of unnecessary treatment," said Mark Lichty, board chair and co-founder of ASPI. "Because of their research, men with low-risk prostate cancer can choose careful monitoring with greater confidence that they are being followed safely."

Active Surveillance is now widely recognized as the preferred management approach for many men with low-risk prostate cancer. Instead of moving immediately to surgery or radiation, patients are monitored over time with tests such as PSA, imaging, physical examination, and biopsy when needed. Treatment remains available if there are signs the cancer is becoming more aggressive.

PRIAS, ERSPC, and the overdiagnosis problem

Schröder's work in screening research provided a crucial scientific foundation for understanding why many men with low-risk, indolent prostate cancer should be spared immediate intervention. His work and that of his colleagues helped shift the field away from reflexive treatment and toward evidence-based surveillance.

"This overdiagnosis is unacceptable because it also leads to treatment," Schröder said, noting that there is now broad agreement that men with low-risk, indolent cancers should not automatically be rushed into intervention.

PRIAS, launched at Erasmus MC in 2006, became one of the world's most important Active Surveillance research efforts. It helped provide physicians and patients with a structured way to monitor low-risk prostate cancer while preserving quality of life.

"We know Active Surveillance is safe," Bangma said. "We now know, with the experience of over 15 years, how to manage Active Surveillance." He added that accepted programs, such as PRIAS, help patients and physicians follow structured monitoring, quality control, and shared decision-making.

Toward more personalized monitoring

A major theme of the Erasmus MC team's work has been de-intensification: safely reducing unnecessary treatment, unnecessary biopsies, and unnecessary burden for patients when the evidence supports it.

Roobol and colleagues have helped advance risk-based monitoring approaches that use patient-specific information to guide decision-making. This includes work on prostate cancer risk calculators, personalized biopsy schedules, MRI-informed monitoring, and dynamic risk models designed to help physicians and patients decide when follow-up testing is truly needed.

For patients, this research matters because Active Surveillance is not simply "doing nothing." It is a structured approach that aims to protect quality of life while keeping a close watch on the cancer.

"Under the PRIAS project, carrying out Active Surveillance means that patients and their doctors work as a team," Bangma said. "They monitor their PSA levels, symptoms, and other markers and commit to doing this until — and only until — these markers change."

About the honorees

Professor Fritz Schröder is one of the world's most respected prostate cancer researchers and a founding leader of the ERSPC trial. His work helped establish the scientific foundation for understanding screening-detected prostate cancer, overdiagnosis, and the need to avoid overtreatment.

Professor Chris Bangma, now retired, served as chair of the Erasmus MC Urology Department and helped build PRIAS into one of the world's most consequential Active Surveillance research programs.

Professor Monique Roobol leads the Urological Research Group at Erasmus MC and has been a central figure in ERSPC, PRIAS, prostate cancer risk prediction, and personalized Active Surveillance research.

About Active Surveillance Patients International

Active Surveillance Patients International is a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating, supporting, and advocating for men with low-risk prostate cancer who are on or considering Active

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Surveillance, along with their families. Through free tools, webinars, community support, and patient resources — including its plain-language guide, *The Pathway: Your Guide to Active Surveillance* — ASPI helps patients understand their options, make informed decisions, and connect with evidence-based information. For more information, visit aspatients.org.

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