

Acknowledgements

Writing a thesis is like going on a mountain trip, never certain to reach the summit, but always aware of difficulties lying ahead. A complicating factor on this trip was the available time for research, which was limited to only one day a week. A very tight schedule and tremendous help from a great number of people have helped me to complete this endeavour.

In this acknowledgements I would like to gratefully thank all those persons that have contributed to make this effort a success. To start off this mission the support of my former director, Carel Frerichs, from the Occupational Health Service, Maetis arbo, was crucial. Equally important was the support of P.J. Spreeuwenberg, former director of Spreeuwenberg Scaffolding Company, who recognised that scientific research could be helpful in order to unravel occupational health issues at a company level. It goes without saying that I am also greatly indebted to the scaffolders who again and again filled out questionnaires and provided me with invaluable data.

Furthermore, I am indebted to Mirande Dawson, my first research assistant, for her support in gathering information at baseline and the first follow-up and Judith Heinrich, my second research assistant, for her support in the second and third follow-up, but also for her input as participating author of one of my articles. A special acknowledgement is necessary for the administrative staff for their continuous effort to facilitate data management: Suzanne Kuiper and Ine de Vries, secretaries of Spreeuwenberg Scaffolding Company, and Sonja Deurloo, secretary of the Department of Public Health, Erasmus MC.

In science you are never on your own. Therefore, I am grateful for the support of all co-authors who made contributions to my articles and their stimulating role in addressing the issues in this thesis: Allard van der Beek, Sandra Molano, F.G.J. van der Meché, Ferko Öry, and Judith Heinrich.

To successfully travel on new paths in science calls for excellent guidance and firm support. Both were provided by my co-promotor, Lex Burdorf, who was always available to encourage challenging discussions and to inspire me to take the next step. Therefore, I wish to express my deepest sympathy and respect for his persistence and sometimes relentless pressure to force me to achieve the ultimate goal. I would also like to thank my promotor Johan Mackenbach for his contribution in creating the conditions which made writing this thesis possible.

Finally, without the support of my wife Hedwig and my children, Thomas, Sophie, and Lisanne, I would never have succeeded. Although they often had to endure my absence they seldom complained. I hope they will enjoy the effort being completed. Although, hardly aware of their stimulating role a word of gratitude is also spoken to the other members of my family and my friends. Unfortunately, my father is no longer with us to celebrate the completion of my thesis.