

EAA Andrology Training Centre
Centre Report

2025

University Hospitals Leuven, Gasthuisberg

Andrology unit

Herestraat 49

3000 Leuven

Belgium

Website: <https://www.uzleuven.be/nl/endocrinologie/andrologische-stoornissen>

CENTRE REPORT

History of Centre

The Leuven andrology centre is more than 50 years old. The first pioneer and founder of andrology in Leuven was prof. Omer Steeno. He started an andrology outpatient clinic as well as a sperm lab in 1966 within the division of endocrinology.

Under the leadership of prof. Dirk Vanderschueren, in March 1999, the Leuven centre was one of the first centres in Europe to be accredited as an EAA training centre. In the past 25 years, 10 fellows were trained in our centre and obtained the EAA 'clinical andrologist' certification. After prof. Vanderschueren retired in September 2024, prof. Leen Antonio took over the position as centre director.

From the early days on, there has been a very active andrological research interest in Leuven. Prof. Guido Verhoeven started a research lab investigating the role of androgens in spermatogenesis. Currently, there are strong collaborations between the andrology clinic and the laboratory of clinical and experimental endocrinology at KU Leuven, as well as with the laboratory of molecular endocrinology, led by Prof. Frank Claessens.

Organization of Centre

The clinical activity of the Leuven andrology centre is characterized by a close collaboration between the department of endocrinology (em. prof. Dirk Vanderschueren, prof. Leen Antonio, dr. Philippe Marcq, prof. Brigitte Decallonne, dr. Karel David) and the department of urology (prof. Maarten Albersen). Prof. Albersen is responsible for andrological surgical care. Both divisions have outpatient clinics that focus on specific aspects of andrology. We offer tertiary care for our patients, as well as clinical training in the full spectrum of andrological pathology.

There is close interaction with the Leuven University Fertility Centre. The andrologists are responsible for the clinical care of patients suffering from male subfertility, semen cryopreservation, oncofreezing in men, as well as the screening of sperm donors and co-management of the UZ Leuven sperm donor bank. The andrology centre is co-responsible for the diagnostic sperm lab (director prof. Carl Spiessens). Weekly clinical multidisciplinary staff meetings for case discussions are organized (andrologist, gynaecologist, genetic counselor, fertility counselor and midwife).

Furthermore, the andrologists and endocrinologists are involved in the medical steering committee for hormonal assays. In recent years, we were involved in developing and validating LC-MS/MS assays for steroid hormone measurements. Currently, steroid hormone profiling and measurements for free testosterone are being developed. There are also close collaborations with the centre for clinical sexology and sex therapy (prof. Rick Roels), including transgender care, male sexual dysfunction and hypersexuality; the centre for human genetics (including whole exome sequencing for hypogonadotropic hypogonadism, differences in sex development and male infertility); as well as with pediatric endocrinology (prof. An Jacobs).

Additionally, formal training agreements exist with the two other EAA training centres in Belgium: the EAA training centre of Brussels (Centre director Prof. H. Tournaye and codirector dr. V. Vloeberghs) and the training centre of Ghent (Centre director Prof. G. T'Sjoen and codirector Dr. A. Mahmoud).

Research activities

Our research program investigates different aspects of andrology from bench to bedside, including epidemiological, clinical, fundamental as well as translational research, including animal models of androgen action. There is an extensive

collaboration between the lab of clinical and experimental endocrinology (prof. Dirk Vanderschueren, prof. Leen Antonio, prof. Brigitte Decallonne and dr. Karel David) and molecular and cellular endocrinology (prof. Frank Claessens). Our research is supported by competitive grants, both from university as well as governmental funding schemes.

The group of Prof. Leen Antonio focuses on steroid hormone binding proteins and their impact on the biological activity of steroid hormones. We aim to improve measurements and clinical applicability of free testosterone. Currently, we are expanding our research to adrenal-derived androgens (11-oxygenated androgens). Our group also participates actively in the European Male Ageing Study (EMAS) as well in the international consortium Androgens in Men (AIMS).

Prof. Frank Claessens (Molecular Endocrinology) focuses on basic research in andrology, including molecular physiology of the androgen receptor, androgen action physiology, as well as androgen action in prostate cancer.

Prof. Maarten Albersen has established basic and translational research lines about penile cancer. Using biomarker and molecular techniques, he investigates mechanisms underlying treatment response and treatment resistance.

The research of Prof. Eline Dancet focuses on patient-centered communication in the field of infertility and urogenital cancer. She leads research projects focusing on mental and sexual health in patients with penile cancer and patients facing infertility.

Prof. Adelheid Soubry is an epigenetic epidemiologist who has developed a new paradigm on paternal influences on offspring health (POHAD). Her research is focused on how paternal lifestyle factors influence the human epigenome and offspring health.

Educational activities

The master of medicine contains introductory courses for endocrinology and urology, also covering basic aspects of andrology. Every year, several medical students do a master thesis in the field of andrology.

Andrology is not a recognized specialty in Belgium. However, every fertility clinic in Belgium is required to have a specialist with specific expertise in andrology in order to be officially recognized as a centre for assisted reproduction. Since academic year 2020-2021, specialists in training (fellows/residents) for internal medicine, endocrinology, urology and gynaecology can follow a formal andrology course during their specialist training, entitled: 'Male sexual (dys)function, andrology and fertility' (14 hours, organized by prof. Leen Antonio and prof. Maarten Albersen).

We also offer the opportunity to follow a more dedicated clinical andrology track for endocrinology, urology and gynaecology fellows who want to obtain the EAA certification of clinical andrologist. Fellows can participate to the andrology outpatient clinics. Urologists are trained in andrological surgical interventions. Observerships in other departments (fertility centre, medical genetics, sexual medicine, ...) are also possible during the training. This program may also involve clinical research. The andrology centre is also responsible for the andrological training of ESHRE-fellows in reproductive medicine.

In the past 5 years, four fellows obtained the EAA 'clinical andrologist' certification. One of our endocrinology staff members (dr. Karel David) obtained the EAA certification in 2022. In March 2023, two of our endocrinology fellows and a staff member of University Hospitals Antwerp, who did her training in our centre, obtained the EAA certification.

Furthermore, we are responsible for courses on male reproductive physiology (8 hours, prof. Leen Antonio) and a specific andrology course (20 hours, prof.

Leen Antonio and prof. Maarten Albersen), organized in the master of sexology. Each year, several students from the master of sexology choose our andrology centre for their master thesis as well.

Both Prof. Dirk Vanderschueren and prof. Leen Antonio Leen are regularly invited to participate in educational activities organized by the EAA as well as other societies. In 2022 prof. Dirk Vanderschueren was clinical chair of the European Congress of Andrology in Barcelona. Prof. Leen Antonio is member of the program organizing committee for the coming European Congress of Andrology in 2026.

Furthermore, we are actively involved in EAA committees and guidelines. Prof. Dirk Vanderschueren is member of the accreditation committee of the EAA that decides upon certifying new EAA training centres. Both prof. Leen Antonio and prof. Dirk Vanderschueren are members of the EAA 'Male health awareness' committee as well as active members of the ANDRONET EU-Cost action. Prof. Leen Antonio is member of the guidelines committee of the EAA and is a member of the steering committee of the Endocrine Society's Men's health special interest group.

Our centre is actively involved in the writing of EAA guidelines, such as the guideline on the management of bone health in the andrological outpatient clinic (DOI: 10.1111/andr.12470). We are currently working on an update of this guideline (prof. Vanderschueren, prof. Antonio, dr. David), in collaboration with the group of prof. Vincenzo Rochira in Modena.

Prof. Maarten Albersen is the past scientific chair of the European Society of Sexual Medicine. Since 2025, he is chair of the European Association of Urology (EAU) Scientific Congress Committee, and in this role, he is responsible for the scientific content of the annual EAU congress.

Clinical activities

The clinical activities of the centre include a coordinated program of clinical care of andrological patients. The clinical care is organized in specific clinical pathways (male infertility, male sexual dysfunction, male hypogonadism, gynecomastia, Klinefelter syndrome...).

Clinical care consists of:

- Diagnosis, counselling, medical treatment and management of andrological disorders in the andrology outpatient clinics within the divisions of endocrinology and urology. These clinics are organized in the same hospital. There is close interaction and referral between the two divisions.
- Diagnostic and therapeutic work-up of patients with male infertility, in close collaboration with the fertility centre. We offer conventional TESE, microTESE, semen cryopreservation, oncofreezing of sperm. UZ Leuven has an internal sperm donor bank.
- Surgical treatment of andrology disorders within the urology division. We are a referral centre for penile cancer in Flanders (prof. Albersen).
- Nurse-led clinics for counselling and education of patients with male sexual dysfunction.
- Laboratory diagnosis of andrology disorders: semen analysis lab, hormonology lab with mass-spectrometry measurements for sex steroids.
- Genetic testing, including whole exome sequencing for disorders of sex development, hypogonadotropic hypogonadism and male infertility.
- Radiological diagnosis of andrological disorders with the radiological department (dr. Liesbeth De Wever).
- Sexual dysfunction and transgender clinic in collaboration with department of psychology and sexology (prof. Rick Roels)
- Sexological as well as fertility counselling within the hospital setting

Name and address of Centre

University Hospitals Leuven
 Andrology unit
 Herestraat 49
 3000 Leuven
 Belgium

Type of CentreUniversity ☐University Hospital ☒Private Centre ☐Other (please specify) **1. Director**Academician ☒Leen Antonio, MD, PhD (endocrinology)Affiliated Member ☐Clinical Andrologist ☒**2a. Clinical responsible**Academician ☒Dirk Vanderschueren, MD, PhD (endocrinology)Affiliated Member ☐Clinical Andrologist ☒**2b. Clinical responsible**Academician ☐Maarten Albersen, MD, PhD (urology)Affiliated Member ☐Clinical Andrologist ☒**2c. Clinical responsible**Academician ☐Brigitte Decallonne, MD, PhD (endocrinology)Affiliated Member ☐Clinical Andrologist ☐**2d. Clinical responsible**Academician ☐Karel David, MD, PhD (endocrinology)Affiliated Member ☒Clinical Andrologist ☒**2e. Clinical responsible**Academician ☐Philippe Marcq, MD (endocrinology)Affiliated Member ☒Clinical Andrologist ☒**2f. Clinical responsible**Academician ☐Karen Peeraer, MD PhD (gynaecology)Affiliated Member ☐Clinical Andrologist ☐**2g. Clinical responsible**Academician ☐Arne Vanhie, MD PhD (gynaecology)Affiliated Member ☐Clinical Andrologist ☐**2h. Clinical responsible**Academician ☐Rick Roels, MD PhD (psychiatry)Affiliated Member ☐Clinical Andrologist ☐**2i. Clinical responsible**Academician ☐An Jacobs, MD PhD (pediatrics)Affiliated Member ☐Clinical Andrologist ☐

3. Present Staff (*Senior Scientists*)

1) Name Prof. Dr. Frank Claessens
 Degree PhD
 Speciality Research in molecular endocrinology, with a specific focus on androgen receptor and prostate cancer

Academician ☒ Affiliated Member ☐ Clinical Andrologist ☐

2) Name Prof. Dr. Carl Spiessens
 Degree PhD
 Speciality Embryologist – head of clinical andrology lab

Academician ☐ Affiliated Member ☐ Clinical Andrologist ☐

3) Name Prof. Dr. Adelheid Soubry
 Degree PhD
 Speciality Epigenetic epidemiologist, with a specific focus of the impact of paternal health on offspring health

Academician ☒ Affiliated Member ☐ Clinical Andrologist ☐

4) Name Efthychia Dimitriadou
 Degree PhD
 Speciality Human genetics, responsible for whole exome sequencing in andrology and fertility

Academician ☐ Affiliated Member ☐ Clinical Andrologist ☐

5) Name Prof. Dr. Eline Dancet
 Degree PhD
 Speciality Midwife, specialized in patient-centered communication in the field of infertility and urogenital cancer

Academician ☐ Affiliated Member ☐ Clinical Andrologist ☐

Insert any additional staff below (*if required*)

Specialists

1) Name	Anouk Vidts (sexology and transgender medicine)
2) Name	Jolien Vander Elst (sexology and transgender medicine)
3) Name	Hanne Devroe (embryology)
4) Name	Annemie Mengels (embryology)
5) Name	Sophie Debrock (embryology)
6) Name	Tom de Waal (PhD, mass spectrometry specialist)

PhD Students

1) Name	Kaat Peperstraete
2) Name	Hanne Willems
3) Name	Nick Narinx
4) Name	Jennifer Afrakoma Nyamaah
5) Name	Astrid Claessens
6) Name	Annekatrien Semal
7) Name	Xianjie Xiu
8) Name	Camille Roumieux
9) Name	Kaat Vandermaesen
10) Name	Laura Elst
11) Name	Jana Depovere
12) Name	Eugenia Casella

Nurses

1) Name	Hilde Morobé
2) Name	Renka Van Heyste
3) Name	Sofie Vandenhoeck
4) Name	Jasmin Paulus
5) Name	Eline Roelants
6) Name	Charlien Janssen
7) Name	Natalie Van den Driessche
8) Name	Marijke Carpentier
9) Name	Liesbeth De Keersmaecker

Laboratory Technicians

1) Name	Pascale Bols
2) Name	Elly Vergison
3) Name	Dieter Schollaert
4) Name	Hilde De Bruyn

Clinical Support Managers

1) Name	Margo Hulsmans
2) Name	Nele Vanmechelen

Administrative Personnel

1) Name	Nadia Scheys
2) Name	Christel Van Meerbeeck
3) Name	Ilse Smets
4) Name	Sarah Cordie

4. Clinical Activity

A. Outpatients: Consultations per year in the last 3 years

	2022	2023	2024
New patients	1107	1679	1697
Follow-up patients	3002	3258	3301
Total	4109	4937	4998

Type of patients in the last years	2022	2023	2024
Male infertility	887	918	934
Male sexual dysfunction	566	545	508
Male hypogonadism	234	233	239
Klinefelter	46	38	53
Gynaecomastia	54	62	64
Cryptorchidism (orchidopexy)	47	62	64
Testicular tumours	292	285	266
Disorders of gender identity	70	71	82
Other (delayed puberty, hypersexuality, prostate tumours, penile tumours)	1913	2723	2788

B. Ultrasound (testis, penile, prostate) *

	2022	2023	2024
Total	Testis: 1199 Penis: 57 Prostate: 1758	Testis: 1163 Penis: 55 Prostate: 1842	Testis: 1212 Penis: 64 Prostate: 1906

** performed at the Department of Radiology*

C. Andrological surgery procedures

	2022	2023	2024
Radiology			
Varicocele treatment (ligation, embolization)	11	12	9
Prostate biopsies	373	355	381
Urology			
Testicular biopsies	28	33	54
BPH (TURP, HoLEP, Millin)	127	159	114
Prostate cancer (radical prostatectomies)	107	119	117
Vasectomy	137	150	131
Vaso-vasostomy	1	3	1
Penile cancer procedures	74	77	79

5. A. Andrology laboratory activity

	2022	2023	2024
Semen analyses	1493	1511	1415
Sperm antibodies	360	369	361
Seminal markers	151	273	179
Diagnostic capacitation	412	438	386

5. B. Andrology laboratory activity

Sperm banking donors Yes ☒ No ☐

Sperm banking cancer patients and other patients Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes:

	2022	2023	2024
Number of samples	161	166	150

5. C. Histopathological evaluation of biopsies Yes ☒ No ☐

5. D. Reproductive Hormones Assays Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes please specify type of assays and number of samples in the last year

Reproductive Hormones Assays

Type of assay	2024
FSH	15751
LH	15713
Inhibin B	88
Testosterone	6402
Prolactin	5303
Oestradiol	15293

We have in-house developed LC-MS/MS methods for testosterone, androstenedione and estradiol

5. E. Y chromosome microdeletions according to EAA/EMQN guidelines Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes number of tests in the past year: 1082

Participation to the EAA quality control scheme? Yes ☒ No ☐

Blood karyotyping Yes ☒ No ☐

Other genetic tests (please specify)

- Whole-exome sequencing for non-obstructive azoospermia, hypogonadotropic hypogonadism and differences in sex development

- Exome sequencing of some primary prostate cancer samples
- RNA-seq and spatial transcriptomic, spatial lipidomics on PCa tumor samples
- Cystic fibrosis
- Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis
- Amniotic fluid karyotyping

6. Collaborations with other Clinical Units of the University/Hospital

IVF Unit	Yes ☒	No ☐
Urology Clinic	Yes ☒	No ☐
Endocrine Clinic	Yes ☒	No ☐
Genetics Lab/Unit	Yes ☒	No ☐
Paediatric Unit	Yes ☒	No ☐
Central Hospital Laboratory	Yes ☒	No ☐
Private Centres	Yes ☒	No ☐

7. Clinical teaching activity

Duration of training (years):

2

	Number
A: Trainees in the last five years	4
B: Trainees who passed EAA-ESAU\exam for Clinical Andrologist in the last 5 yrs	4
C: Trainees working in the centre preparing to pass the EAA-ESAU examination	1
D: PhD Students	12
E: Medical Students	6
F: Other students (MSc)	6

8. Formal Andrology teaching program

Yes ☒

No ☐

If yes: specify duration (years/months):

Years ☐ 1

Months ☐

	Hours of formal teaching per year	Professional training (weeks/months)
Medical Students	4	
PhD Students		4 hours/week
Fellows	16	6 hours/week (4 years internal medicine – 2 years endocrinology)
Students in sexology	26	

9. Research Activity (maximum 1 page)

Please shortly describe the main research topics of the centre and list the most relevant papers in peer review journals (with IF) related to these activities.

The full list of publications (years 2019 - 2024) are presented at the end of this report.

1. The Changing Landscape in the Assessment of Steroid Hormone concentrations: is it time to let them free? (CLASH-free) (L. Antonio, K. David, N. Narinx)
2. Protein androgen interactions (PANINA): looking beyond the horizon of testosterone (L. Antonio, K. David, J.A. Nyamaah)
3. New therapeutic targets in the dimerization modes that drive androgen receptor functioning (F. Claessens, K. Peperstraete)
4. Androgen receptor signaling inhibition in high-risk prostate cancer (F. Claessens, S. Joniau, H. Willems)
5. Advancing Penile, Vulvar and Urethral Squamous Cell Carcinoma management by identifying tissue and blood-based signals for chemo-immunotherapy response (M. Albersen, K. Vandermaesen)
6. Clinical and translational research in penile cancer (M. Albersen, K. Vandermaesen, X. Xiu, A. Semal, L. Elst)
7. Sexual rehabilitation in couples confronted with penile cancer (E. Dancet, M. Albersen, C. Roumieux)
8. Epigenetic-environmental interactions in the male germ line and epigenetic inheritance of paternal exposure through sperm cells (A. Soubry, J. Depovere, E. Casella)

10. Research Funding

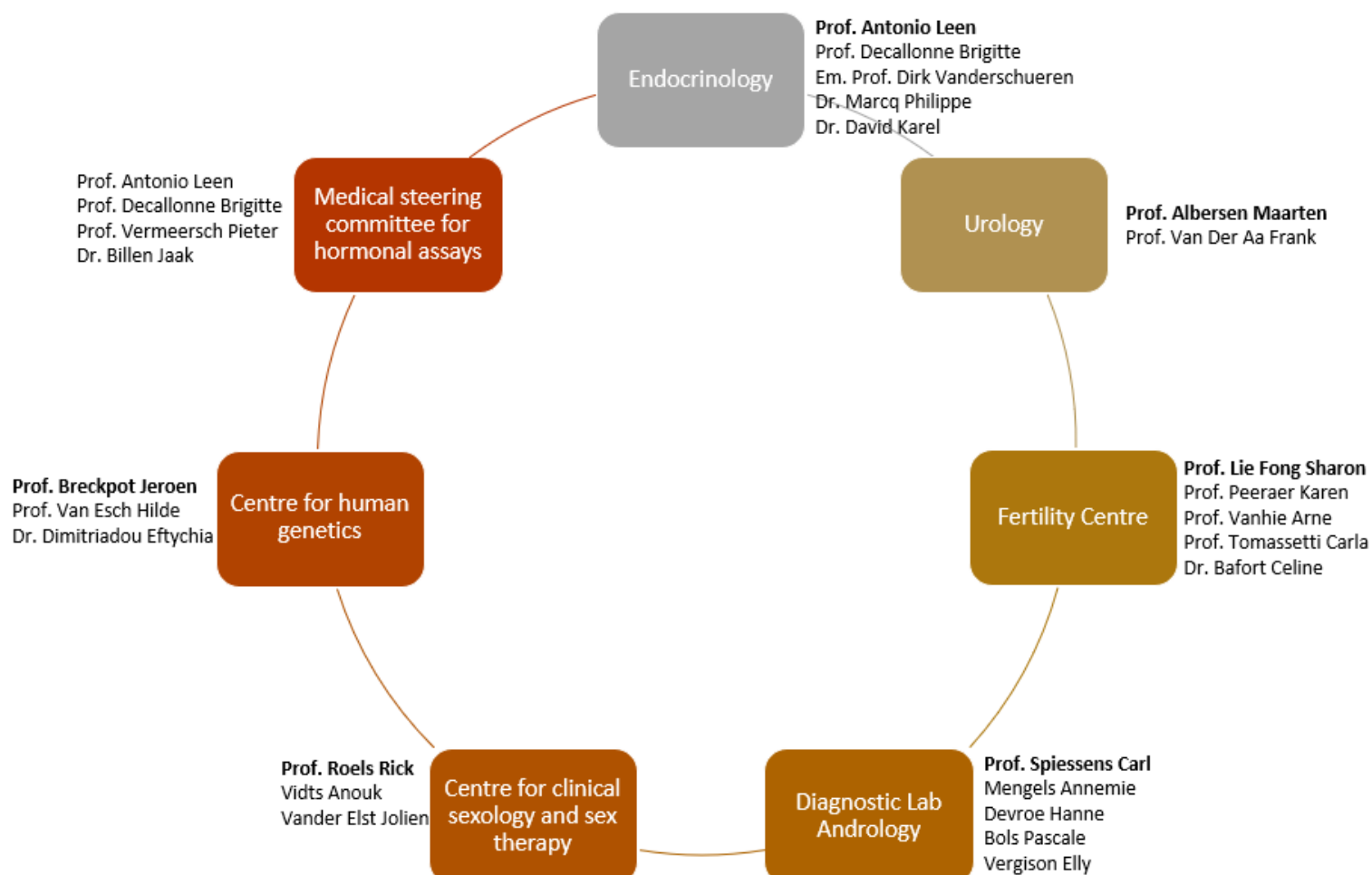
Please specify the amount of available funds in the last 3 years and their source (Government, European Union, University, Local Government, Pharmaceutical Industries, Banks, Foundations....)

Year	2022
Total amount (€)	ca. 1.100.000
Funding Source(s)	University-Government-Foundations

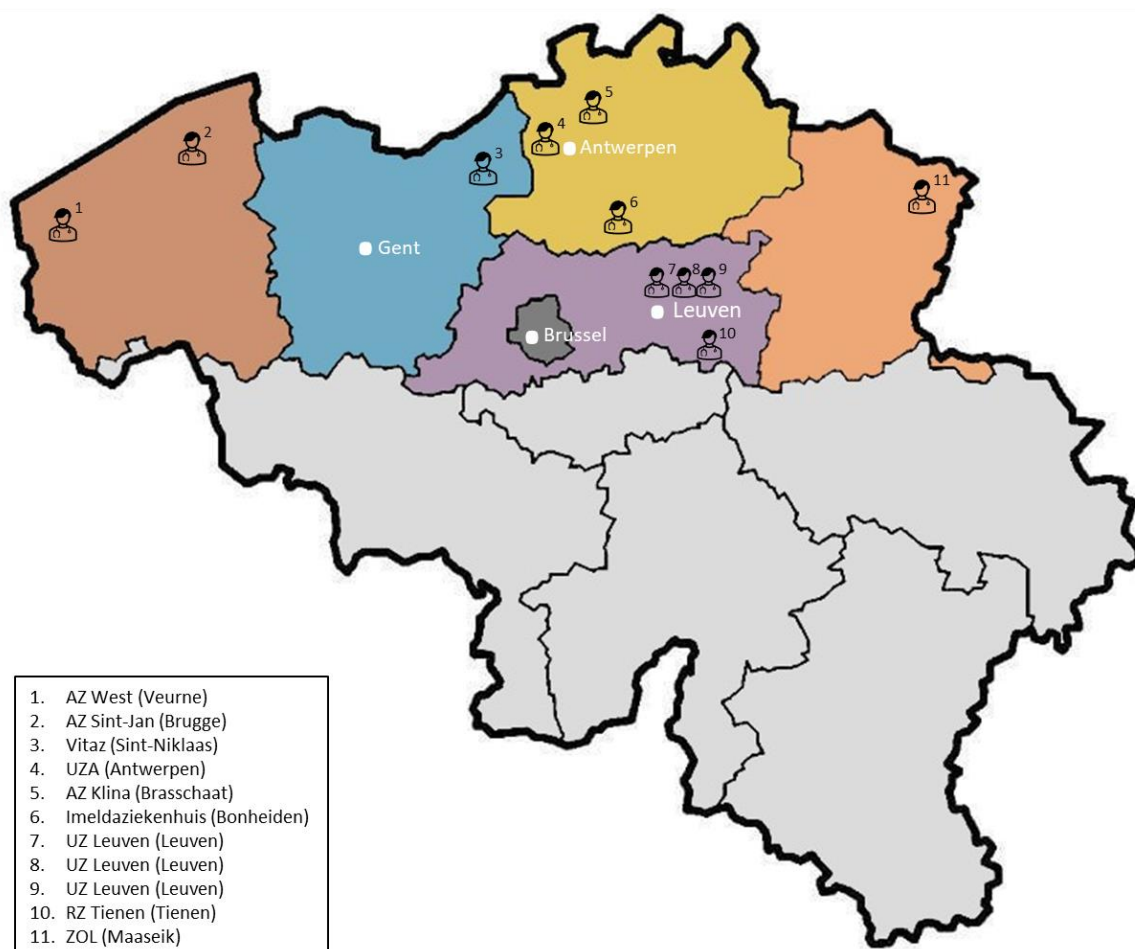
Year	2023
Total amount (€)	ca. 1.100.000
Funding Source(s)	University-Government-Foundations

Year	2024
Total amount (€)	ca. 1.100.000
Funding Source(s)	University-Government-Foundations

ORGANIZATION CHARTS: the program of care of andrological patients in Leuven consists of a well-organized multidisciplinary network



CONTRIBUTION OF OUR CENTRE TO EDUCATIONAL ANDROLOGY ACTIVITY IN FLANDERS: every pictogram is a clinical andrologist who was trained in the Leuven centre and received the EAA certification of clinical andrologist. This figure illustrates that our collaborating EAA clinical andrologists are active in every province of Flanders.



CENTRE PHOTOS

Figure 1: External view of University hospitals Leuven



Figure 2: Entrance of the andrology lab at the Fertility centre



Figure 3: Cryopreservation facility



FULL LIST OF PUBLICATIONS (with IF) of staff members between 1-1-2019 and 31-12-2024

Journal articles 2024

Anand-Ivell, R., Heng, K., Antonio, L., Bartfai, G., Casanueva, F.F., Maggi, M., O'Neill, T.W., Punab, M., Rastrelli, G., Slowikowska-Hilczer, J., Tournoy, J., Vanderschueren, D., Wu, F.C W., Huhtaniemi, I.T., Ivell, R. with Ivell, R. (corresp. author) (2024). Insulin-like peptide 3 (INSL3) as an indicator of leydig cell insufficiency (LCI) in Middle-aged and older men with hypogonadism: reference range and threshold. *AGING MALE*, 27 (1), Art.No. ARTN 2346322. [doi: 10.1080/13685538.2024.2346322](https://doi.org/10.1080/13685538.2024.2346322) (citations: 8) (Impact factor: 2.60)

[Open Access](#)

Vandermaesen, K., Lee, W.G., Elst, L., Hoornweg, M., Brouwer, O.R., Albersen, M. with Albersen, M. (corresp. author) (2024). A Video-illustrated Overview of Reconstructive Surgical Techniques Following Penile Cancer Treatment. *EUROPEAN UROLOGY FOCUS*, 10 (6), 935-937. [doi: 10.1016/j.euf.2024.05.021](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euf.2024.05.021) (citations: 0) (Impact factor: 5.60)

Milonas, D., Giesen, A., Laenen, A., Devos, G., Briganti, A., Gontero, P., Karnes, R.J., Chlosta, P., Claessens, F., De Meerleer, G., Everaerts, W., Graefen, M., Marchioro, G., Sanchez-Salas, R., Tombal, B., Van Der Poel, H., Van Poppel, H., Spahn, M., Joniau, S., European Multicenter Prostate Cancer Clinical and (2024). Effect of Radical Prostatectomy on Survival for Men with High-risk Nonmetastatic Prostate Cancer Features Selected According to STAMPEDE Criteria: An EMPaCT Study. *Eur Urol Oncol*, 7 (6), 1478-1486. [doi: 10.1016/j.euo.2024.05.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euo.2024.05.016) (Impact factor: 9.30) [Open Access](#)

Avitan, O., Rafael, T., Vreeburg, M., Elst, L., Bekers, E.M., Albersen, M., Jordanova, E.S., Brouwer, O. with Avitan, O. (corresp. author) (2024). Penile intraepithelial neoplasia incidence, clinical classification, microenvironment and implications for imiquimod treatment. *BJU INTERNATIONAL*, 134 (6), 881-889. [doi: 10.1111/bju.16473](https://doi.org/10.1111/bju.16473) (citations: 0) (Impact factor: 4.50)

Elst, L., Albersen, M. with Albersen, M. (corresp. author) (2024). Letter to the Editor re: Laura Elst, Gino Philips, Kaat Vandermaesen, et al. Single-cell Atlas of Penile Cancer Reveals TP53 Mutations as a Driver of an Aggressive Phenotype, Irrespective of Human Papillomavirus Status, and Provides Clues for Treatment Personalization. *EUROPEAN UROLOGY*, 86 (6), Art.No. ARTN e147. [doi: 10.1016/j.eururo.2024.08.018](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eururo.2024.08.018) (citations: 1) (Impact factor: 25.20)

Nyamaah, J.A., Narinx, N., Antonio, L., Vanderschueren, D. with Vanderschueren, D. (corresp. author) (2024). Use of calculated free testosterone in men: advantages and limitations. *CURRENT OPINION IN ENDOCRINOLOGY DIABETES AND OBESITY*, 31 (6), 230-235. [doi: 10.1097/MED.0000000000000891](https://doi.org/10.1097/MED.0000000000000891) (citations: 6) (Impact factor: 2.70)

[Open Access](#)

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