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Perfect pitstops

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PERFECT PITSTOPS

Towards evidence-based supportive care in children with cancer

ERIK ARNOLDUS HENRICUS LOEFFEN

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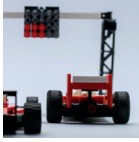
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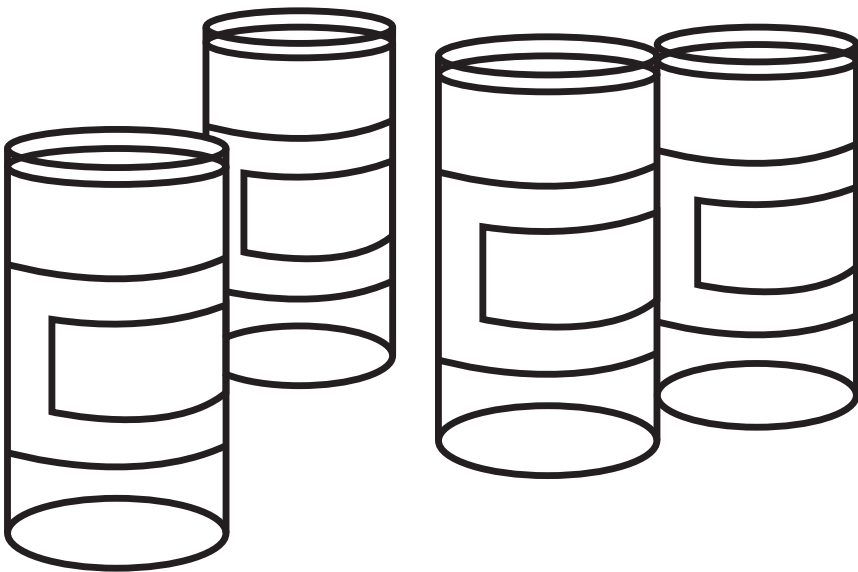
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PREFACE

Although at first glance it might seem weird to see a Formula 1 pitstop on the cover of a thesis about supportive care in children with cancer, there is actually more than meets the eye. The pitstop is the moment when a racing car stops to change tyres, undergo repairs or mechanical adjustments, or to refuel. In other words, during a pitstop the car is optimally prepared or adjusted to undergo the remaining part of the race. Supportive care in children with cancer is all care except the anti-cancer treatment, comprising things like pain management, antibiotic therapy, and psychological interventions. In other words, with supportive care a child is optimally prepared or treated to undergo the remaining part of his or her treatment. Therefore, in a way supportive care interventions are the pitstops of cancer treatment.

This is not where the analogy ends. In a Formula 1 race, the cars are continuously monitored. When an intervention is deemed necessary, the driver is called into the pitlane. In childhood cancer care, the child is continuously monitored and when an intervention is deemed necessary, the patient is 'called in'. In addition, in Formula 1 racing, the decision to pit is not solely taken by the engineer(s), but is always discussed with the driver. This is also the case with supportive care, healthcare professionals always discuss the situation and interventions that are deemed appropriate with the child and his/her caregivers.

Then why "Perfect Pitstops"? In the research described in this thesis we have aimed to develop supportive care guidelines, to standardize and optimize care and thus patient outcomes. Formula 1 pitstops are highly protocolized, field-tested operations, that are refined based on previous research and adjusted according to the actual circumstances. This is also true with our guidelines; the recommendations are based on previous study findings and the recommended action should always be evaluated in the light of the patients' specific circumstances. Thus interventions as perfect as possible.

So therefore "Perfect Pitstops" and the scene of a pitstop on the cover. The child is driving the car, and the symptoms have just been treated (e.g. the 'pain' tyre is changed for the 'no pain' tyre) by a team of healthcare professionals. The scene is depicted with LEGO® bricks, as are the scenes preceding each chapter. This is done because I like the idea that children who stumble across my thesis (otherwise probably referred to by them as "boring book") in my consultation room can also enjoy flipping through the pages. It is because all of the above that the choice to have this thesis Formula 1 pitstop themed is the only logical one. The fact that I am a huge Formula 1 fan is of course merely a coincidence.

Groningen, January 2019

