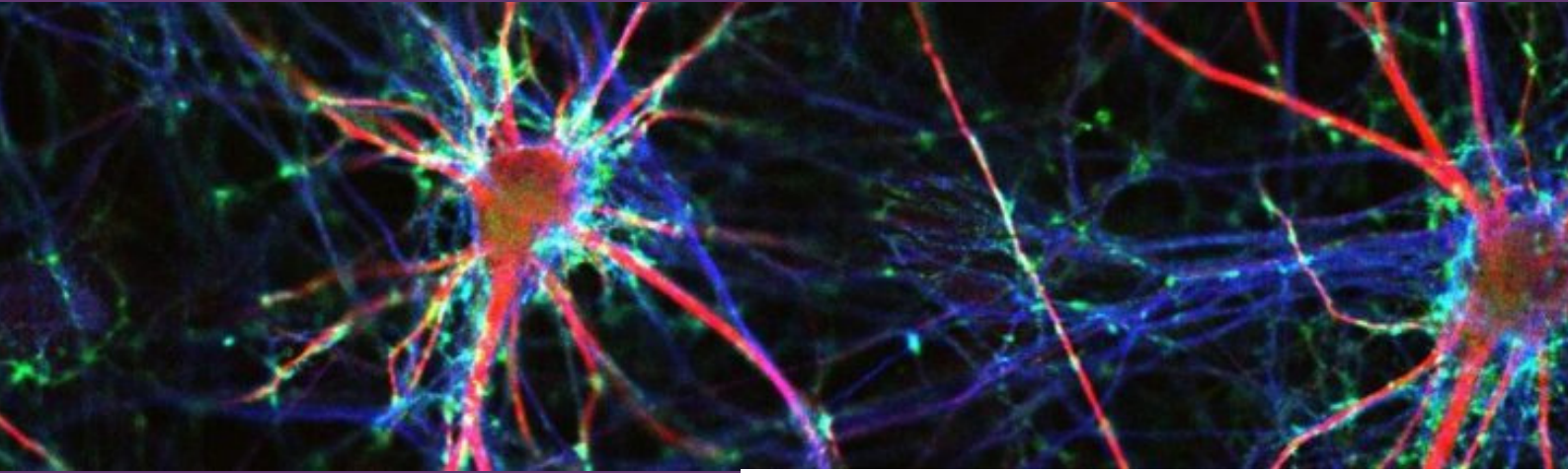


# ONWAR Newsletter



## Upcoming Courses

### Grant Writing (FULL)

Christian Lohmann: March 31 - July 11

### Molecular Neurobiology and Genetics (MOVED)

Guus Smit: June 23 - 27

### Statistics in Neuroscience

Sophie van der Sluis: September - October

### Neuropsychopharmacology

Micha Wilhelmus: September 8 - 12

### Degenerative Diseases of the brain

Wilma van de Berg: October 6 - 10

### ONWAR introductory course 20-22 October

Mandatory for the 1st year ONWAR students,  
registration link will be send out after summer

### Cognitive Neuroscience (MOVED)

Jake Westerberg: November 3 - 7

### Functional Imaging and Super Resolution

Erasmus IOC: November 10-14

### Programming in Matlab

Jurjen Broeke: December, TBA

### Current Issues in Clinical Neuroscience

2026

Please sign up through [registration@onwar.nl](mailto:registration@onwar.nl)

\*Are you not an ONWAR-member (yet)?

Also just drop us an email, we'll see if we can get you a spot in the course.

## Dear ONWAR members,

Just another update from our side! Here something about the courses, the first ONWAR student ever and how to deal with issues during your PhD.

**ONWAR's  
first PhD student  
never!**

Hello ONWAR

My name is **Matthijs Verhage** and I am a professor of Functional Genomics at the CNCR (VU and AUMC). I have graduated about 70 PhD-students (all ONWAR of course, except a few). Kim asked me to fill this corner because I am also myself the first PhD-student that graduated under ONWAR (then still ONWA). ONWA officially started Jan 1<sup>st</sup>, 1991. My promotor, the late Fernando Lopes da Silva, was one of ONWA's founders and proposed to include me, although I graduated in December 1990. To be honest, I did not see the advantage. Of course, I had not benefitted from any training program and I figured that graduating at a graduate school that did not even exist, would give me little career advantage. But there was a special ceremony early 1991 and I was really honored. I remember I decided to wear a tie. Now, ONWAR has many assets, not only training, but also a certified quality standard, great annual meetings, promoting an inspiring and safe environment and much more, as we all know. And before ONWA, neuroscience institutes in Amsterdam were more isolated, with even some antagonism. ONWA really brought neuroscientists in Amsterdam together. After I returned to Holland, I became a strong ONWA supporter. A large collaboration with ErasmusMC, NeuroBsic, helped to add the R and we transferred the organization of the annual meetings into the hands of the students, which really helped to develop the social dimension. After one session I chaired around 2000, the organizers had to admit that the reward that was purchased for the chairs, was unfortunately drunk, late the previous evening by some of the participants. Since 2007, my department hosts the ONWAR office, first with Els Borghols, then Renee and now Kim. I think Fernando foresaw in December 1990 that including me would support ONWAR in the long run.



## Upcoming Swammerdam Lectures

Marie Eve Trembley - May 7<sup>th</sup>  
 Ragnhildur Thóra Káradóttir – October 3<sup>rd</sup>  
 Kia Nobre - October 30<sup>th</sup>  
 Gonçalo Castelo-Branco - January 28<sup>th</sup>

## More Upcoming Events

Company Tour [Merck](#) - May  
 (more information soon)

ONWAR / CEN Annual PhD meeting at Woudschoten  
 October 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>

ONWAR Career Event April 2026  
 We're still looking for some people to join the committee!



ONWAR  
 SWAMMERDAM LECTURE - May 7th

Marie-Eve  
 Trembley

Hosted by Eleonora Aronica

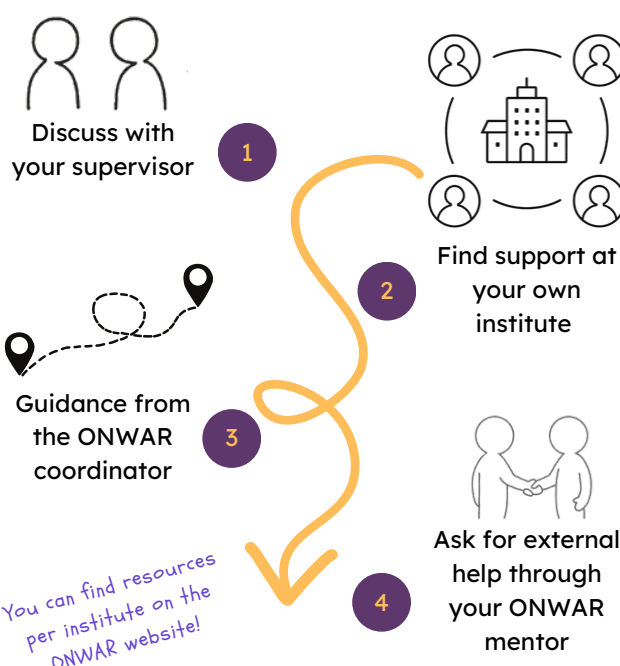


## What to do if you run into problems during your PhD?

You're developing into a professional in the exciting field of neuroscience, a real achievement to celebrate. However, the PhD journey can be tough, with challenges like stress, sleepless nights, financial concerns, insecurity, time pressure, writer's block, conflicts with your supervisor, or feeling alone. Whatever you face, help is always available. We provide clear steps and support options, so you can continue to progress in both your research and personal well-being.

Try discussing your issue with your own supervisor. They can probably relate to your problems!

There are various roles that can assist you in finding answers or support. Are you a bit lost in options? HR can always direct you to the right person, perhaps your institute has a PhD candidate advisor who will help you reach the right person.



Still didn't find the right help? You can always reach out to the ONWAR coordinator, who knows who to direct you to.

### ONWAR mentor

Sometimes, external insights are crucial for addressing scientific questions or resolving team dynamics within your research group. As part of our support system, ONWAR mentors are ready to assist you. These experts from various faculties, appointed after the TSP, provide confidential and specialized advice to help you navigate complex academic challenges. Each PhD candidate should have an assigned ONWAR mentor; if you haven't been introduced to yours, please contact the ONWAR coordinator to facilitate this essential connection.

## Meet one of your fellow ONWAR colleagues!



Clara

Hi everyone, my name is Clara, and I'm a 4th-year PhD student in the INF department of the CNCR at the VU. I joined ONWAR in December 2021 and my research focuses on understanding the cortical circuits of drive—the neural mechanisms underlying motivated behavior—in mice. As part of my project, I developed a fully automated living environment for mice, enabling me to perform in vivo calcium imaging with Miniscopes and optogenetics.

When I started this journey, I knew very little about coding or electrical engineering, but over time, I've come to enjoy most of my work ;)

Beyond research, I've loved being part of the ONWAR Career Day organizing committee and am now working on launching the Green CNCR, a group focused on promoting sustainability in our social and lab practices. I'm deeply passionate about the environment and love art in all forms—whether admiring it or diving into one of my many creative hobbies. As you can see I am also a big foodie.

My tip for younger PhD students? Establish clear communication with your supervisors early on. If you're unsure about how something was meant in a meeting, ask for clarification. If something doesn't sit right, bring it up—open and honest dialogue helps build stronger working relationships and makes the PhD journey much more enjoyable. It's all about setting boundaries and finding what works for both of you!