

Meet Elisabeth Rutten, our 2026 European Endocrine Nurse Awardee



Miss Elisabeth Rutten, from Ghent, Belgium, is our 2026 European Endocrine Nurse Awardee. She will deliver her Award Lecture in Prague at ECE 2026. Read on to learn more about her career in endocrinology, her advice for future endocrinologists, and what you can look forward to hearing her talk about at the Congress.

Please tell us about your current role

I worked for many years as an endocrine nurse at the endocrinology outpatient clinic of Ghent University Hospital, and for 16 years I combined this with my work for the AcroCare project, supporting people with acromegaly, as a self-employed professional. For the past few years, I have been working as a genetic counsellor at Ghent University Hospital, combined with the Heart4Acro project.

How were you inspired to work in endocrinology?

From the moment AcroCare started, I was intrigued by the rare disease acromegaly, because it is an 'and-and-and' story: a combination of multiple conditions. It was an honour to educate this patient group and to listen to their diverse stories. Over the years, this project became a true passion.

What will you discuss in your Award Lecture at ECE 2026?

My presentation at ECE 2026 will mainly focus on my journey as an endocrine nurse: how it all started and how everything evolved, the importance of endocrine nursing, and what I have achieved over the years as an endocrine nurse.

My journey began with a short project that was initially planned to last 18 months, but which grew into a great success and ultimately lasted 16 years. The AcroCare project included a home-care educational programme for people with acromegaly. For 16 years, I provided education and information, which were greatly appreciated. Over the years, I realised that more support was needed, and I founded the non-profit patient organisation Living with Acromegaly, where I organise an annual information day and where patients can connect with peers.

Gradually, I became involved in several organisations such as the ESE Nurse Working Group, Worldwide Adrenal and Pituitary Organizations, the Federation of International Nurses in Endocrinology and RaDiOrg (the Belgian umbrella organisation for people with rare diseases). When AcroCare came to an end, I was determined to continue the project, which led to the launch of Heart4Acro, a similar educational programme introduced through the patient organisation.

What are you most proud of in your career, and in life in general?

I am especially proud of having founded a patient organisation (the first of its kind), of creating a website and brochures, of giving the role of endocrine nurse a name (even though it is not officially recognised in Belgium) and of moving heaven and earth to ensure the continuation of the project through the patient organisation. I am also proud of the many patient videos we created, the podcasts we recorded for doctors and patients, and the large number of presentations I have been invited to give.

What is likely to be the next breakthrough in your area of interest?

I want to continue striving for greater awareness of acromegaly, for optimal guidance and follow-up, for improving quality of life, for breaking down vulnerability, and for paying close attention to the psychosocial and emotional aspects. In my role as a genetic counsellor, I also want to keep counselling families about the genetic mutations related to endocrinology.

What are the biggest challenges in your field right now?

These are providing education and information through Heart4Acro, counselling families and offering accurate information, and continuously improving my work as Chair of the patient organisation.

What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work?

The enormous gratitude of patients – both through the educational programme and during family counselling – gives me tremendous fulfilment.

What are you most looking forward to at ECE 2026?

I will very much enjoy meeting my European and international colleagues again. Over the years, we have become a close group of friends. Of course, I consider it a great honour to receive the Award, which I am eagerly anticipating, and which, above all, represents recognition of my work as an endocrine nurse and counsellor.

Why should people join ESE?

Without ESE I would never have been able to do many of the things I have done. These include building a network around endocrine nursing, establishing many contacts in the pharmaceutical industry, exchanging so much information, co-authoring the book *Advanced Practice in Endocrinology Nursing*, winning a Best Poster Award, receiving this Award, meeting so many fantastic colleagues with the same interests, participating in the ESE Nurse Working Group, or sharing my passion! I strongly encourage every young endocrine nurse or endocrinologist to get involved in ESE.

What words of wisdom do you have for aspiring endocrinologists?

Every patient has their own story. It is crucial to truly *listen* to patients – to listen between the lines and beyond their words – to give them the attention they need, and to treat them with accuracy and empathy.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I am incredibly grateful to ESE for everything: for so many years of well-organised Congresses from which I learned so much, and where I met so many wonderful people. ESE has undoubtedly been a cornerstone of my entire journey in endocrinology.