



The Dutch Institute

Huppes Kemp

Publisher: AuthorHouse Pages: 198 Price: (paperback) \$18.24

ISBN: 9781481782289

Reviewed: May, 2013

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Suspense is abundant in *The Dutch Institute*, as the author duo known as Huppes Kemp exposes a dark side of socialized medicine. Set in the Netherlands and seemingly written for a Dutch audience, the novel posits the dangers of medical care controlled and paid for by a government.

The central character, Maarten, is a physician working for the institute, which controls Dutch medical care. He is terminally ill with cancer and seeks alternative treatments the institute won't approve. For a time, Maarten effectively treats himself at home with a common but dangerous acid, but seeks permanent treatment via new drugs being suppressed by the Institute, its partners and suppliers, who are withholding new treatments to profit from old, ineffective ones. He wants to find a cure for himself and publicize the conspiracy to the world.

His wife, Shifrah, a former Mossad agent, works with him to uncover fraud and conspiracy. She risks stealing information in order to use it to persuade key players to make other treatments available. When the institute retaliates, break-ins, kidnappings, gunfights and last-minute escapes (one on ice skates across a frozen river) result.

While readers will find such events exciting to follow, problems hamper the overall story: Maarten and Shifrah's goal is to airlift Maarten to Russia for experimental treatment. It's never clear why Maarten can't receive treatment in other countries, such as the United States. American readers will be confused by the Dutch medical system, which isn't explained. In addition, bits of Russian conversation aren't translated, making reading confusing; one character is sometimes referred to by an initial and then a full name, and evidence of the fraud is hard to follow.

Although these issues impede the story's effectiveness as fiction, the book may appeal to readers interested in conspiracies and the debate about socialized medicine. The author duo has a clear message about its dangers but also offers hope that alternative cancer treatments will prove successful.

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