

# MANGO *moment*

A small act of kindness & leadership



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# FOREWORD

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Almost every corporate vision or mission statement will tell you that the customer is king. It's actually a bit of a cliché and it would be rather odd if the focus of a healthcare organisation were not on its patients. After all, they are surrounded by a whole army of experts and given the best possible care. But maybe the question we should be asking is whether the same attention is given to the human being behind the patient. That's what this book on Mangomoments, is all about.

In this era of technological progress, artificial intelligence, genetics and electronics, the patient is often reduced to a collection of blood counts, radiological images and clinical descriptions. Doctors, nurses and other caregivers do their utmost to explain this in human language and try to get everyone involved in the treatment or the process. But, when you find yourself in a vulnerable situation, is this really enough?

Healthcare facilities disconnect the patient from their environment, their trusted partner, and their friends. Sometimes it's only when the cleaner makes their daily visit that the patient has any contact with someone from the hospital who is

not intent on providing treatment. This contact with everyday normality can be calming and reassuring. A glimpse of humanity, a joke, a small gesture: offering just that little bit more than routine care and taking a friendly approach instead of merely providing clinical empathy often make all the difference. These small, attentive gestures sometimes work miracles and can have a major impact on the motivation of the patient or resident, often putting the sparkle back in their eyes.

The term 'Mangomoments' refers to gestures like this, when someone pays some attention to the human being behind the patient, thereby shifting the focus to the human side of healthcare.

This book brings together a collection of stories, scientific insights and critical reflections. After the introduction by two international experts, Professor Kris Vanhaecht explains how it all started, followed in the next section by thirteen inspiring stories about warm-hearted care sent to us by patients, family members and healthcare professionals. The team that carried out the research about Mangomoments, which was only possible thanks to the support of Kom op tegen Kanker (Stand Up to Cancer), developed the Mangomoment model. This book also covers the various aspects of this model and how it came into being. Finally, we asked twenty-nine experts from all over the world to reflect on Mangomoments, based on their role and perspective. These reflections, from the point of view of patient, company, management and healthcare professional offer you a number of building blocks that may help you to find a place for Mangomoments within your own organisation. The final series of reflections highlight the fact that Mangomoments have a wider applicability than the care sector alone. The final word is left to Stand up to Cancer, the organisation that made it possible for the Mangomoment to grow from an idea into the movement it is today.

The aim of the KU Leuven Institute for Healthcare Policy (LIHP) in publishing this book and establishing the KU Leuven Mangomoment Fund is to support and disseminate a positive healthcare message. More information about the Fund can be found at [www.mangomoment.org](http://www.mangomoment.org).

The beneficial effects on patient motivation, but also on the motivation of staff and the healthcare institution itself are worthy of further study. The academics in question will continue to work hard on this.

The most important message of this book, however, is that behind every patient is a flesh-and-blood human being who needs those small, friendly and familiar gestures to keep them optimistic about the future.

So, don't lose sight of the human being behind the patient!

**Prof. Dr. Dirk De Ridder**  
**Head of Department at the**  
**KU Leuven Institute for Healthcare Policy**



# PREFACE

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**Pedro Delgado**, head of Europe and Latin America, Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Boston.

**Maureen Bisognano**, president emerita, Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Boston & Faculty member of the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, Boston.

When Kris first told me about Mangomoments, memories flooded in for me. I, Pedro Delgado, grew up in Venezuela, where mangos can be grabbed off trees everywhere. I ate them at every stage of their development – from green (harder, more acidic) to yellow (softer, sweet) – with the same amount of pleasure and, more importantly, with freedom and joy. As I developed my throwing and catching skills, higher-up mangos became targets for long-distance throws. My friends and I used to compete for who could get more mangos “down”, and once we knocked them loose, who could catch more mangos as they fell. The objective was to protect them from hitting the ground as they fell, since the impact could damage their lovely shape and texture. A few years ago, during a senior leadership meeting with healthcare executives in Singapore, I heard a slight bang on the roof and asked what happened. Our hosts explained that branches of a mango tree reached above the small building, and mangos often fell. I couldn’t stop myself from describing my mango memories. To my surprise, 15 minutes later they brought in a tray of the fallen mangos, sliced up for the afternoon break. Pure joy. The memories generated an emotional response to Kris’ moving story –

I found Mangomoments instantly appealing and incredibly moving. When Kris told Maureen about this idea, she too experienced a similar connection to heart and mind.

In our work on healthcare improvement across the globe, we have promoted patient-centredness as a cornerstone of improvement and leadership, one of the six Institute of Medicine domains of healthcare quality, clearly interconnected with dignity and Joy in Work. We support the annual ‘What Matters to You?’ day, now a global movement. We’ve witnessed the evolution from patient engagement to partnership with patients, along with the increased practice of co-design and co-production of health and care. These are concepts and practices closely connect with the values of love, equity, trust and courage of the Institute of Healthcare Improvement (IHI). Furthermore, they’re concepts that have a mutually beneficial and reinforcing positive effect for patients and healthcare professionals. We’ve learned that in leadership it takes courage to let go, to share or cede control to those we serve, and to include patient-centredness and partnership into daily practice in healthcare. And the evidence for leaders is clear: compassion in care is improving patient experiences, decreasing medical errors, and is a powerful tool to decreasing costs in healthcare – a sure path to achieving IHI’s Triple Aim.

Mangomoment stories from this book are moving, a source of hope and inspiration for us all. As Dr. Barbara Fredrickson argues, for human beings to flourish, we need to get essential daily nutrients — not only from food, but also from a laugh, a hug or even a smaller moment of positive emotion, especially with someone with whom we click. Healthcare professionals are ideally placed to touch people’s lives at times of vulnerability by going above and beyond treating core physical symptoms and suffering. As you’ll read throughout this book, simple questions can evoke fascinating exchanges, and open surprising opportunities to activate pathways of mutual compassion, gratefulness and appreciation. We love the simplicity of the Mangomoment concept, and its international adoption is testament to how pragmatic it is, and how much appetite exists for creating extraordinary moments as part of what we do daily in healthcare. The book also contains deep reflections from leaders that invite us all to consider additional angles to Mangomoments and underline their relevance in today’s efforts towards better care, better health and sustainable costs.

The cost and availability of mangos globally varies greatly. The good news for healthcare is that Mangomoments do not need a tropical climate to thrive – they need a receptive environment and a desire for making every single patient experience extraordinary. We all stand to gain hugely from the benefits of these special, sacred moments. We dream of a future where Mangomoments are not an exception but a self-embraced rule, with millions of professionals and patients reaping the benefits of compassion and positive resonance daily. Let’s accept the gift of Mangomoments and the invitation to make them available everywhere and start to write a new chapter for healthcare of partnership, full of stories that in the future, will allow our memories to be flooded with interactions that enriched lives at the time and forever.



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# HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

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Two months after awaking from a coma in the intensive care unit, Viviane described how hard she had found it lying in bed with nothing to do but listen to the alarms from all the equipment and stare at the white ceiling. She spoke of seeing deceased family members standing by her bed and hearing their voices. And of how she considered asking for euthanasia. But during the same interview Viviane also talked about gradually starting to enjoy life's little pleasures again, such as eating a meal or just looking out the window.

In 2015, Viviane shared these experiences with Annemie Struyf, a journalist of the Flemish public broadcast service VRT. Her testimony was part of a gripping documentary entitled 'Via Annemie' about life in intensive care at the University Hospitals Leuven. Clearly touched by Viviane's story, Annemie paused during the interview before asking: "Is there anything you're looking forward to?" Viviane thought for a moment and then responded: "A mango, I would love to taste a mango again." At the end of filming, Annemie paid Viviane another visit, this time bringing a mango as a gift. It was Viviane's turn to be touched. Moved to tears by this small gesture she said: "I'll never, ever forget this!"

When I watched the documentary, I was confused. Why hadn't any of Viviane's caregivers known that a mango was all it would take to make Viviane so happy? And how could a small gift give a patient such a positive experience? Or was it just because it was Annemie Struyf, a well-known journalist? I contacted Annemie and told her about my work as a professor at the KU Leuven Institute for Healthcare Policy on topics such as quality of care, patient safety incidents and second victims. I asked her if this 'Mangomoment' had been staged or had come about spontaneously. "Of course it was spontaneous. It just happened. There was a positive chemistry between us", was Annemie's answer.

The documentary gave me the idea of introducing the Mangomoment concept. At first, responses tended to be negative. I was told it was a silly and unscientific idea and faced comments such as 'Why focus so much on this? We're all doing our best, aren't we? And we're already so busy.' But after conversations with my colleague Barbara, who suggested the name Mangomoment, my dear daughter Manon, who at the age of 10 clearly understood what Mangomoment was all about, and some passionate doctors and patients, I felt we needed to do something more with it. I got my academic team all fired up about the idea and we put our heads together and refused to give up. We persisted and initiated a project at three Flemish hospitals, the University Hospitals Leuven, the General Hospital Diest and the Imelda Hospital Bonheiden. This project that was made possible by the financial support of Stand up to Cancer. The pilot in three hospitals grew into a person-centred movement involving more than fifty healthcare organisations from Flanders and the Netherlands. In January 2018, we published an article in *The Lancet Oncology*, a top scientific medical journal. This brought the Mangomoment international attention and we suddenly found ourselves being taken seriously by the academic world. More than a year later we completed the study 'From Never to Always Events: in search of Mangomoments'. Thanks to our campaign within healthcare organisations and via social media, we have collected 1,045 Mangomoment stories that were donated by patients and their relatives and caregivers. The research team conducted 120 in-depth interviews and organised four focus groups. In December 2018, 'Mangomoment' was just pipped at the post as the word of the year in Flanders, and took third place in the Netherlands. With the concept receiving increasing interest from abroad, we still don't know where this story will end. Mangomoment was mentioned during conferences and symposia all over the world by global leaders in healthcare management. The

original video with Annemie and Viviane, which is available at [www.mangomoment.org](http://www.mangomoment.org), has been used worldwide by our Mangomoment ambassadors. A Dutch book on Mangomoments was launched in June 2019, and my daughter Manon handed over the first book to Viviane. This gesture too, both will never forget. More than 1,000 people followed the live streaming on Facebook of the presentation of the book and the inauguration of the Mangomoment Fund. This KU Leuven Fund will support research and teaching on person-centred care. In October 2019 we received an additional grant from Stand Up To Cancer to launch Mangomoment Inspiration Workshops in forty healthcare organisations and collaborate with them for the next three years. In this new project we will search for a Mangomoment Culture and we will develop the Mangomoment Culture Scale. We spoke at many conferences and we had the privilege to see and feel how people, young and old, clinicians and managers, patients and family, the ill and healthy, were all touched by the Mangomoment movement. Nowadays we receive more and more questions and feedback from companies outside healthcare as Mangomoments touch their general management and leadership challenges.

The publication of this English book is an important step towards anchoring those little courtesies and gestures into the quality policy of any warm-hearted organisation worldwide.

## The Mangomoment book

In writing this new book, we hope to provide inspiration, motivation and food for thought for current and future patients, nursing home residents, home care providers, general hospitals, and providers of psychiatric and rehabilitation care, as well as those caring for the disabled. Inspiration from the many beautiful stories about Mangomoments that were sent to us. Motivation to give person-centredness a central role in the field of healthcare quality. And food for thought for readers reflecting how they can and want to work together towards more warm-hearted care based on their own unique role in the healthcare sector. Moreover, these stories and reflections are also meant to inspire the workforce and leadership team from service industry outside healthcare.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to everyone who has shared stories, and especially the people whose stories we selected for publication in the book. These are just a few of the more than a thousand stories that inspired us; they could have come from any organisation worldwide and will as such be familiar to many caregivers, patients and family members. We are, of course, grateful to Annemie Struyf for inspiring us, and to the one and only Viviane for her enthusiasm, her ambassadorship of the Mangomoment concept, and her warm friendship. I would also like to thank all employees and contacts in the partner organisations and the members of our advisory board. A special thank you to my international friends and mentors. Without them, 'Mangomoments' would never have become the movement it is today.

We are grateful to the authors of the reflections for presenting their visions and helping you, the reader, to reflect on the future of customer centricity. I would like to thank all the staff at KU Leuven who, each based on their own expertise, made this book, the Mangomoment movement and the Mangomoment Fund possible. We are also grateful to our financial ambassadors Emeritus Professor Collen, law firm Dewallens en Partners, as well as Best Choice by Special Fruit.

All proceeds from this book will be donated to the KU Leuven Mangomoment Fund.

Finally, I would like to thank the whole team of Stand Up To Cancer for giving this crazy idea such a unique opportunity and for continuing to believe in the campaign, the search for stories and the implementation of Mangomoments.

## Just a coincidence...?

I'm still wondering whether it was a coincidence that Viviane was longing for a mango. In October 2017, during our campaign, the film *Victoria & Abdul*, starring Dame Judi Dench and focussing on the relationship between the queen and her servant, was showing in cinemas. Walking through the park, Victoria asks: "A mango, what is it?" Abdul answers: "The queen of fruit! In India, gifting a basket of mangos is considered a gesture of friendship. The sacred mango tree is a symbol

of love.” The trailer closes with the words: “A queen for a queen. Abdul introduced Victoria to the mango, and made the world a little sweeter.”

Maybe it’s time to put healthcare in a more positive light too. After all the – sometimes negative – reports in the media about medical errors, staffing shortages, burnout and financial difficulties, these positive Mangomoments allow us to learn from each other and inspire one another even in healthcare organisations. Or as we concluded in The Lancet: “Mangomoments can help us to make healthcare a little sweeter.” And maybe this is not only our wish for healthcare but also for all organisations where kindness and leadership may enhance the quality of life for all stakeholders.

I wish you happy reading and hope you find inspiration and food for thought in the search for more warm-hearted care.

**Prof. Dr. Kris Vanhaecht,**  
**associate professor in quality and patient safety,**  
**KU Leuven**

“Mangomoments are small, unexpected, surprising, sometimes almost imperceptible actions, courtesies or gestures between patients, residents, family members and/or care providers during the day-to-day provision of care. They don’t take a lot of time, resources or energy and create a positive bond between those involved.”

**More information:** [www.mangomoment.org](http://www.mangomoment.org)