In countries with a gatekeeper system, family doctors are the first to contact when someone's cognitive functions may be declining. However, still many home-dwelling people are only diagnosed with dementia when it has already reached an advanced stage. This asks for more insight into the process of recognition and diagnosis in primary care and for ways to improve the identification of people with cognitive impairment or dementia who may benefit from timely care.

In this thesis, the following questions are addressed:

• Are Dutch family doctors aware of the presence or absence of cognitive impairment among their patients?

• How accurate are the dementia diagnoses that are registered in medical records? And how accurate are family doctors' dementia diagnoses in consecutive patients presenting for consultation?

• What proportion of people with and without cognitive impairment wants to be informed about a diagnosis of dementia? What arguments are given for and against disclosure?

• Can we improve family doctors' recognition of mild cognitive impairment and dementia by training them to diagnose these conditions and by having practice nurses perform case finding among older people in whom doctors suspect cognitive impairment? And what is the effect of such case finding and subsequent care on the mental health of older people and their close relatives?