WHAT DO PHDS FROM HEALTH SCIENCES DO?

Career Portraits 2021




AARHUS UNIVERSITY

AU CAREER
PHD & JR

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INTRODUCTION

This is a collection of career portraits of former PhD students from the health sciences at Aarhus University. Some of the big questions for PhD students are often “what do PhDs actually do?” as well as ‘’Where do they find work and what are their job positions?’’ This collection of career portraits seeks to answer that question by giving 21 examples of different career paths and the considerations behind the career choices.

The collection of career portraits is the outcome of interviews conducted by PhD-students during a PhD course on Career Management Skills (CMS) held for PhD students from primarily Health in the autumn of 2021. The focus of the course was primarily on careers outside of academia, so the majority of the portraits are of PhDs working in the industry.

Enjoy the reading and we hope you will gain interesting insights as well as inspiration.

From the course organizers:
Kamille Smidt Rasmussen (Clinfo) and Vibeke Broe (AU Career PhD & JR) Aarhus University 2021

Career Portraits 2021

PhDs working in the private sector

Education:
2012-2015: PhD in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
2005-2011: MSc in Molecular Biology and Human Nutrition

Jobs:
2021- present: Membrane NPD Engineer
2020-2021: Food Scientist, AFI
2019-2020: Nutrition Research Scientist, AFI
2018-2019: Application Scientist, Arla Foods Ingredients (AFI)
2015-2018: Post Doc., Aarhus University

Kristine Blans – Membrane NPD Engineer – SPX Flow

What kind of position do you have today?
Kristine is a Membrane NPD (new product development) Engineer at SPX Flow, Silkeborg. Here, she is a part of the Innovation Center, providing technical process solutions for customers within the food and beverage industry. She is using her scientific research background in a technical and process oriented context; more specifically her biochemical and nutritional knowledge for designing, developing and optimizing membrane solutions. An example is membrane filtration of compounds within food flows, such as how to produce the best process solutions for whey, or best possible soy or oat milk. SPX Flow is an international company with Headquaters in North Carolina and operations in more than 30 countries, including Innovation facilities in Silkeborg and Copenhagen.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
After finishing a Master of Science, Kristine started job searching outside academia. She was interested in the industry, but also realized that a PhD would enable more career possibilities. When finishing her PhD in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, she was offered a Postdoc position including collaboration with Arla Foods Ingredients (AFI) and aimed for a later transition towards the industry. Due to the industrial collaboration, she did not doubt entering the postdoc position, and could easily see this career step pointing towards a more smooth transition afterwards.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
Experience from working within academia and industry as well as personal important priorities. Work distance, influence and flexibility in tasks and working hours have been important considerations.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
Kristine have had 3 different temporary positions at Arla Foods Ingredients, for which one led to another. Although short and demanding with temporary positions, it has provided her with great organizational insight and been a considerable opportunity to find the right place.
For her current position at SPX Flow, Kristine was contacted on Linkedin, as the company were looking for a candidate with experience within the biochemistry of milk and a scientist from the milk industry.

How did you find your first job/current job?

For the first position as an Application Scientist at AFI, Kristine was hired on a regular basis from a job ad posted on jobindex. She applied, went through 2 interviews, personality and IQ tests and was offered the position.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
Within Arla, Kristine knew a few persons, without knowing if it made any difference. For the position at SPX Flow, she did not know anyone in particular. However, she became aware of the company at a PhD defence of a former colleague from Aarhus University and Foulum, who the company had hired before he finished his PhD, but she was not familiar with the existence of the company before this.

Describe a typical day/week?
At AFI, tasks were more specific, and the workflow established within relatively short deadlines and many meetings. Costumers need a product. In the current position, which is more process oriented, there is a different workflow and environment, due to the engineering field. There is a great diversity in the everyday, for which she may be included in process experiments, finding innovation collaborators, planning and advising. There are less meetings and a more individual workflow.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
Scientific knowledge and understanding as well as generic properties. Kristine highlights that you learn a lot during a PhD, and many of these competences are used and further developed in your future career.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
Balancing quality and time, and on a daily and weekly basis to highly prioritize tasks. Noteworthy, also project and stakeholder management approaches would have been very useful to be more familiar with.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
More focus on the project management part, an obvious tool for getting (well) to the end of the PhD, and in many positions after the PhD definitely beneficial and playing an essential role. She wished she had been more aware of active project management and learned how to use different tools.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Be aware that you might not find the right place in the first positions and the beginning of your carrier. And that is okay, you learn all the way. If it does not feel right, you are allowed to move on. Strongly consider whether you should make a postdoc, if it remains solely in basic research. This may become a hindrance to a later transition.
Sometimes you just have to throw yourself into something; it is only here you will discover, what you think is fun, what you want to do, and what you do not want to do.

Simone Schandorf Elstrøm

Education:
2012-2016: PhD in Medicine
2009-2012: MSc in Sport Science

Jobs:
2020-Present: Nutrition Scientist, Arla Foods
2018-2020: Clinical Researcher, Steno Diabetes Center
2017-2018: Post Doc., Aarhus University
2016-2017: Post Doc., Joslin Diabetes Center, Harvard Medical School

Andreas Buch Møller – Nutrition Scientist – Arla Foods

What kind of position do you have today?
Andreas is a Nutrition Scientist at Arla Foods, Aarhus.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
In the end of Andreas' PhD, he wanted to go abroad. Andreas went to Boston, USA, and trained as a research fellow at Joslin Diabetes Center at Harvard Medical School. However, after a year he moved back and ended up in a postdoc at the Steno Diabetes Center Aarhus. After a while, he had the possibility to either keep doing research or to take another path, possibly moving into the industry.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
Andreas wanted to develop his professional skills in translating science into business. After ten years of research focusing on molecular endocrinology, he wanted to learn how to innovate research findings into impact at society level. Thus, he joined Arla's Innovation Centre as a maternity cover being confident that he would be able to develop his professional skills in this regard.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
Andreas worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston, USA for a year after his Ph.D. ended. Thereafter he worked at the Clinical Department at Aarhus University Hospital as a postdoc for about a year and eventually as a clinical researcher at the Steno Diabetes Center for two years. It was at the Steno Diabetes Center that Andreas met a colleague who ended up getting him his current job.

How did you find your first job/current job?
Andreas was looking for opportunities to take a position to develop professional skills to translate research into business. An old colleague of his was about to go on maternity leave and called up Andreas to recommended him for a cover for her leave.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company before you started?
An old colleague was the primary contact that led to Andreas getting his current job

Describe a typical day/week?
A typical workweek can be divided into three main parts. Two days out of five are typically spent on managing the Arla Food for Health fund. Arla Food for health is a private-public partnership that aims at deciphering health effects of dairy and dairy ingredients. Here, Andreas is involved in writing and publishing calls, managing the different interest parties of the fund and helps with study design and feedback on projects.

Further, one to two days a week are spent on supporting Arla's business in MENA (Middle East and North

Africa). In short, Andreas is facilitating that healthy products are developed for the market and that nutritional demands of target consumers are met. Arla's Health Strategy focuses on reducing the amount of fat, salt, and added sugar in their products, which eventually improves the public health scenario in the region.
Furthermore, Andreas takes part in ensuring that Arla's products are natural. Practically, this means that when an ingredient is to be added to their products, such as modified starch for instance, Andreas will investigate whether or not this product can still be regarded as natural and give feedback on whether or not it should be added.

What skills and experiences from your PHD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
The skills that Andreas benefits most from is his solid research training. It is key that he understands both basic and clinical research in his daily tasks. Andreas points out that this makes him an asset as he provides specialist knowledge to the company.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
What Andreas is still learning, is the translation of his expert knowledge to impact in the company. Companies are very consumer-driven and the basics behind "business understanding" are one of the skills that scientists may lack and understanding of how you can get your agenda through.

What would you have done differently during your PhD which (if anything) considering your current career?
Andreas was very happy with how his PhD went. However, he wishes that he had the possibility to stay abroad longer after his PhD.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Keep an open mind for new methodologies and technologies – Andreas would have liked to have had more hands-on with systems biology approaches for instance, for the sake of understanding it better, which would have helped him understand some of the cutting-edge research better. However, Andreas points out that it has to make sense and the technology/method should be relevant for your career trajectory.
Furthermore, it is wise to think about your CV. You should diversify your expertise and experiences when it comes to career. The advice is to go where you can grow.

Jean-Claude Kresse

Education:
2015-2018: PhD in Nanoscience
2013:2015: MSc in Chemistry

Jobs:
2020-Present: Chemist at Fertin Pharma
2018-2019: Post Doc. in the group of Henrik Helligsøe
2016-2018: PhD in the group of Troels Skrydstrup

Simon Laursen – Chemist – Fertin Pharma

What kind of position do you have today?
Chemist at Fertin Pharma, Non-pharma department.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
Approx. 2 months before ending my post doc position.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
With my background in organic synthetic chemistry, I wanted to experience how to use my knowledge in a private company setting and apply my skills within real life products.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
Prior positions were all within academia at AU.

How did you find your first job/current job?
I found my current job through jobindex.dk

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
I knew approx. 6 persons at Fertin Pharma before I applied for my current job. One of these (a friend from my bachelor education) offered to contact my current employer over a cup of coffee to highlight me.

Describe a typical day/week?
My position is mainly focused on analytical analysis of several active ingredients in different matrices and development and validation of improved analytical methods for detection and quantification of new active ingredients. Furthermore, I am responsible for providing the necessary chemical aspects to new and present projects and assist in risk assessments. Lastly, I am responsible for creating new projects that deals with the avoidance of certain chemical pathways; hereunder identification of the responsible chemical pathways and providing solutions to overcome the unwanted side-reactions of the active ingredient.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
While my everyday tasks benefits from my knowledge within analytical and organic chemistry, it is mainly my skills within troubleshooting and experiment design (obtained through my PhD) that allow me to set up systems that can give our department a deeper insight into the chemical behavior of our products and in extension hereof, solutions to eliminate potential problems.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?

During the PhD, I had my own projects which did not depend much on others and only had one direction which I was responsible for. As such, my biggest challenge has been to adapt to projects which contain multiple persons where the project is influenced from all sides and can change directions depending on other factors which I am not involved in.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
I think that it would be a great advantage if there were more collaboration between the university (PhD student) and private companies, but even by this collaboration, I think it would be difficult to get a proper insight into the flow and work of companies.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
My biggest advice is to be open to the possibilities. It is very easy to believe that the only thing that you are great at and want to do, is deeply connected to your PhD project. There is a world of possibilities in which the chemical skills can be employed. In extension hereof, it is important to notice which skills you have obtained which are not directly associated with the PhD project: Project management, interdepartmental collaborations, and, in general, the scientific approach towards problems are skills that are easily overlooked because you are used to be surrounded by peers that exhibit the same skills.

Jemila Peter Gomes

Education:
2012-2015: PhD in Health Science
2003-2007: MSc in Nursing
1996-2000: Nurse

Jobs:
2018-present: Vice President, Danish Nursing Association
2016-2018: Head of Education, Master in Clinical Nursing, SDU
2015-2016: Innovation Consultant, OUH
1998-2012: Different positions as a clinical nurse

Dorte Boe Danbjørg – Vice President – Danish Nursing Association

What kind of position do you have today?
I am the Vice President of Danish Nurses Organization. I was elected in 2018. My main focus is that nurses have the best possible conditions to perform nursing. Many people asked me after I finished my Ph.D.: "Why didn't you just become a medical doctor?!" However, I believe that nursing is an important profession, which lacks recognition as an important profession in a health care system oriented towards treatment. I want to prove that nursing makes a difference. So, I write debates, participate in demonstrations and speak to the public. Whenever possible I use research-based knowledge to support my arguments.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the Ph.D.?
Initially, I wanted to stay closer to clinical nursing. Nevertheless, I found it difficult to find a position where I could use my competencies, and therefore I made other choices. When you conduct a Ph.D., it is because you're an ambitious person. You want to have an impact on your field and set a direction. I used my network to talk about possibilities and my next steps.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
I want to be able to influence, where we are going as a profession. I have previously been politically active so it wasn't an unknown path for me.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
Yes, I have had different jobs, all with different responsibilities. But always related to nursing. I have always been driven by nursing. In some way, it might be a modern "call". I have always believed that nursing is one of the finest professions – we carry the tradition of caring. It can be with a concrete task, like helping people go to the toilet, or it can be to show empathy to a person in much grieve and pain. But the system leaves little room to actually do what we as nurses can. And I want to change that!

How did you find your first job/current job?
In my current job as a vice president, the members of the Danish Nursing Organization elected me. I have been active in the DNO for some years. I have been a local representative during my years as a clinical nurse and have also been in the regional department. For 7 years I was also active in child politics in the Danish organization FOLA. So, it is not unfamiliar to me to be politically active.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
I have a big network of people with different backgrounds. We meet and talk about our current situations. To be elected among the members in DNO, I could use my network to talk about my strategies and goals. At some point, one told me: "Don't be afraid to stand by your profile as an academic nurse".

Describe a typical day/week?
There is no "typical"! My days and weeks are characterized by being with ever-changing agendas. So concrete tasks are very unpredictable. Of course, we have regular meetings with boards and so on, but I also have to be ready to act on current demands. In 2020-2021, Covid-19 and the collective agreement have been overshadowing all other agendas. So, there's been a lot of meetings with employers, politicians, councils and other organizations. In addition, we have to communicate with the press through radio, tv and newspapers. I also have to be in concurrent dialogue with the members of DNO, e.g. at local meetings, social media and demonstrations.

What skills and experiences from your Ph.D. studies do you have the most benefit of today?
I guess I can process complicated text quite fast. I also benefit from being able to communicate at many different levels. In addition, much like when doing a Ph.D., I now work with something that does not give results right here and now – I work with long-term strategies. Finally, yet importantly: the title as a Ph.D. matter.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your Ph.D. which you have developed afterwards?
Be aware of your career. I had to learn, how to think strategic about my career, which there wasn't much focus on when I did my PhD.

What would you have done differently during your Ph.D. (if anything) considering your current career?
Try to enjoy it. Use your network to discuss your career opportunities.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her Ph.D. studies?
Think about your career. You have a lot to offer. And it's ok to have an opinion – express it. You have a lot of knowledge, based on your research. You should tell the world about it!

Julie Duval Jensen

Education:
2007: PhD in Biomedical Engineering
2005: MSc in Biomedical Engineering

Jobs:
2021-Present: Senior Data Scientist, Systematic
2019-Present: External Lecturer, Dept. of Computer Science, AU
2015-2021: Distinguished Research Scientist, Alexandra Institute
2011-2015: Assistant Professor, Aarhus School of Engineering
2008-2011: Post Doc., Glostrup Hospital

Henrik Pedersen – Senior Data Scientist – Systematic A/S

What kind of position do you have today?
Henrik is currently a Senior Data Scientist at Systematic. His job involves helping customers (e.g., municipalities, public libraries or the police) to use data in an innovative way in order to improve their workflow or understand a particular problem.
Additionally, he is an external lecturer at Department of Computer Science, Aarhus University, where he is teaching and supervising different student projects, including master's projects.

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?
He started looking 4-6 month before the end of his PhD. He had no detailed plan but wanted to stay within research. He used his network from his PhD to find a postdoc position within a similar research area as his PhD.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
He was interested in staying in academia to do research. However, the temporary positions and different workplaces made it difficult to align with his personal life. Thus, he chose a position with more job security as assistant professor and later on moved to a job in a private company.
He enjoyed doing research, however the pressure to publish and continually looking for funding, made him move away from traditional research in academia.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
Henrik worked as an assistant professor at Aarhus School of Engineering for almost five years, where he was teaching Computer Vision and data analysis. Additionally, he did some research, however, in a different area than his PhD studies.
After this, he moved to industry to work at Alexandra Instituttet, where he performed research for a wide range of private companies.

How did you find your first job/current job?
Henrik found his first job as a postdoc by using his network obtained during his PhD. He asked for any open positions and fortunately he found one.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
Contacts form collaborators during his PhD.

Describe a typical day/week:
As a Senior Data Scientist at Systematic, he reads research literature to keep himself updated on the newest technologies and methods. Besides, he does 'proof of concept' of new technologies/methods as a way of innovating the usage of data for his customers.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
The ability to acquire new knowledge and solve problems on his own, in situations where there might be no one around to ask. He has learned to be persistent and determined to find an answer/solution to a problem. He has also learned to identify people outside his daily work environment, which might be able to help him. Additionally, he acquired dissemination skills, particularly in academic/technical writing.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
Business/commercial knowledge, however, this cannot be expected from a PhD student.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
Nothing. Every step has brought new knowledge and experience, even though it might be difficult to put into words.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Do not be afraid to seek new jobs/positions that do not match your particular research topic or background. If you can manage a PhD and become an expert in one field, you can also acquire knowledge and become an expert in other areas. The interest and motivation will come as you learn more about a new topic.

Lasse Stensvig Madsen

Education:
2009-2013: MSc and PhD in Department of Molecular Biology (iNano) and Bioinformatics Research Center, Aarhus University

Jobs:
2020-Present: Lead Bioinformatics Scientist, PipeBio
2015-2020: Senior Bioinformatics Scientist, product owner, QIAGEN
2013-2015: Bioinformatics Scientist, CLC bio (a QIAGEN company)

Zsuzsanna S. Etches – Lead Bioinformatics Scientist – Pipe | Bio

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?
CLC bio was a partner in my PhD project, so I was collaborating with them and they expressed an interest in hiring me over a year before I finished my PhD. I was unsure about whether I would want to pursue a career in academia or in industry until the last minute, and I had some paths open in both directions, but eventually decided to go with CLC bio.

What kind of position do you have today?
I am a scientist and software developer at PipeBio, which is a small startup where we develop software for antibody sequence analysis and the engineering of antibody-based therapeutics. Most of my time is spent as a software developer, mostly developing bioinformatics-heavy data analysis features, but also often touching on other parts of the code, e.g. the front-end. I also attend meetings with customers and support them with their specific analysis needs, and within the PipeBio team I contribute to defining the future directions for the software and architecting our future designs.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
I have always enjoyed solving difficult problems using computers and wanted to be able to stay technical in my daily work. It gives me a lot of job satisfaction when I am able to solve a real-world problem for a customer, particularly if the problem is quite challenging and requires some specialized skills that I have. At a startup, we are very close to our customers, and this close contact makes the impact of my work very immediate and concrete.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
Yes, I worked at QIAGEN (which acquired CLC bio) for 7 years before my current position. At QIAGEN I was also a software developer and bioinformatician for several years before I took up a product ownership role. I actually met the CEO of my current company in my previous job, so it's a small world.

How did you find your first job/current job?
For my current job, I came across a job ad - even though it was written by a recruiter and didn't specify the company name, I suspected which company it might be, as I had previously noticed a LinkedIn update from my former colleague when he announced the startup, and the description matched. I contacted the recruiter with my CV, and he said it seemed like a perfect fit. Three weeks and a few interviews later I had a signed contract.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?

The CEO of my current company and I had an overlap of a few months at my previous company. We never actually worked together on a project, but of course we knew each other and had a lot of common connections, which obviously helped.

Describe a typical day/week in your current job?
PipeBio is fully remote, so I work from home most of the time. (We do meet up once in a while, mostly to socialize.) We start every day with "stand-up" over Zoom, and at the end of the day everyone sends a sign-off update to the team with a short summary of their day. During the day, we have many spontaneous meetings and it feels like we communicate as much as we would if we sat next to each other. I participate in some customer meetings during the day as well, and otherwise I just immerse myself in code. We also have a weekly structure where we start out on Mondays with a longer planning meeting, where we evaluate the last week and set priorities for the next one. When I joined PipeBio, it was a very young company in the middle of a covid lockdown, and remote working was more incidental than planned. But, quite unexpectedly, it is working really well for me, and I think I now prefer this to a regular office job.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
My job requires me to code software relating to bioinformatics, so I rely on the programming experience and bioinformatics background I acquired during my PhD almost every day. A PhD also helps develop "soft skills" that are useful, for example an ability to quickly absorb new complex information, focus for a long stretch of time, organize your time over a longer project and communicate in an interdisciplinary team.

What skills would you say you didn’t develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
In the beginning I needed to learn a lot about entrepreneurship and how "the corporate world" works. Even if you're a specialist, you'll quickly be exposed to many new terms like "KPI" or "SOP", accounting numbers, market information etc., this was a whole new world for me.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
The only thing I can think of is that I would have benefited from some advice or coaching to know what to expect in the contract for my first job after the PhD - the typical terms and salary ranges with/without pension for similar positions. The PhD contract is quite different from a contract in the private sector, and once you're offered a position, you have to respond and make decisions very fast. Personally, I lacked confidence in my expectations and numbers as I went into that process for the first time, which made it unnecessarily stressful for me and didn't quite play out to my advantage on my first payslip either.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Look for a job where you can do what you love, and if you have options then choose with your heart rather than your wallet. Prepare yourself well for the contract negotiations, so you can go into the process with confidence. But remember that your first job is just your first job: it's not the end of the world if it isn't a perfect fit, so relax and enjoy the ride.

Luana Domingo

Education:
2015-2018: PhD in Health Sciences
2012-2015: MSc in Molecular Medicine

Jobs:
2018-Present: Patent Attorney at HOIBERG

Vibeke Bay – Patent Attorney – HOIBERG

What kind of position do you have today?
Patent Attorney

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
After attending the course "Prepare yourself on the movement from a PhD in Health sciences to a career outside academia" during fall 2017, I also became aware that you could get a mentor, which I got in December 2017. My mentor looked though my CV and encouraged me to write an application for a job. In February 2018, I wrote my first application.
The encouragement from the mentorship to write an application this early on was what led me to initiate my job search. If I had not attended the course or been involved in a mentorship-programme, I probably would not have applied this early on, as I was first set to finish my PhD in April 2018.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
I went through job ads and saw the ad from HOIBERG seeking a patent attorney. It was very different from what I had imagined myself doing, but on the other hand, I thought that I might be fit for the job. As I was applying during my PhD, I wanted to start with a job that I was not fully invested in. With that being said, I did find the job very interesting. I did not hear back from them for a month or so, but then I got a call for an interview, which led me to getting the job.
Getting a job can be about being at the right place at the right time. So many things can affect whether you will even apply for a certain job or more importantly get the job or not. It might not just be your qualifications but also if the other applicants are just a bit better fitted than you.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
No

How did you find your first job/current job?
Job ad.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
None

Describe a typical day/week?
I serve as a link between inventors and patent authorities. I am in dialogue with inventors. We go through their inventions in order for me to understand them fully. It is essential that you understand the invention, which makes your educational background very important. After talking to the inventors, I write the patent application, compose text and patent claims. Following, I communicate back and forth with the patent

authorities. The patent authorities are those evaluating whether the invention can be patented, or if the application needs any changes. This is an ongoing process, which can last between two to ten years.
My days are normally distributed as such: 20 % meetings with costumers, 40 % writing patent applications or patent claims, 40 % e-mails, coordination of tasks, meeting deadlines, and other tasks.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?

- English writing, especially from writing articles.
- Organizational skills. I have gained a lot of experience with planning through my background with setting up experiments. We are not setting up experiments as such; however, it is important to be able to plan your tasks as we work within rigid deadlines.
- Knowing the academic language. I often talk to people employed within academia and it is valuable to have an understanding of their way of thinking and speaking.
- The background knowledge I gained from my PhD, but especially from my master's in molecular medicine.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?

- To keep deadlines (in academia you are often delayed☺).
- Businesses understanding: you are a part of a business that needs to make a profit, so you have to meet your deadlines and specific tasks in order for the company to progress. Moreover, patents are a business in itself: an invention needs to be sellable in order for it to get a patent.
- Writing in "patent language".

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
No, I do not think so. You never know where you are going to end up.
At first, I thought I wanted a career within academia. However, as I changed my mind, I thought I might work for a company like Arla or Novo Nordisk. Therefore, I planned to improve my experience with microbiological assays, which I never followed through. Along the way, I doubted whether any of these companies would be the right fit for me. I do not think that you can prepare yourself 100 % for a job outside academia. No matter your experience level, you will always need to get extra education or a learning period in a new job, and you will always feel green. I just think it is important to carry out your PhD at 100 %, as this will give you valuable experience.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Apply for many different jobs. Job ads are sometimes poor at portraying the actual job tasks within the employment. Do not get too affected by rejections. It can be the small details that determine who will get the job.
When making the application - give it your all, it will be apparent from your application.
Call the person listed on the job ad if you have any (relevant) questions. It will give you an advantage in your application as you can target it more specifically to the job and as a further benefit, the company will potentially have a recollection of your name when going through applicants.

Malene Blond

Education:
2021: PhD in Molecular Biology
2016: MSc in Molecular Biology

Jobs:
2021-Present: Food Scientist at Arla Foods Ingredients
2016-2017: Assistant Scientist at DuPont

Maria Stenum Hansen – Food Scientist – Arla Foods Ingredients

What kind of position do you have today?
I work as a food scientist at Arla Food Ingredients, discover R&D – Chemistry & Documentation

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
I was considering possibilities the last six months of my PhD and was looking for interesting job opportunities but was critical in my search. I already knew before I started my PhD that I wanted to return to the industry.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
After finishing my master, I got a job in the industry at DuPont. It was a maternity leave position, so it was a good opportunity for me to see if this was a job, I could do as a permanent job. However, meanwhile I was working at DuPont, my former supervisor contacted me with an opportunity to do a PhD within the same area as I did my master. Since the position at DuPont was temporary, I said yes to reenter the academic world. Having tried to work in the industry compared to academia, I found out that to me it is more motivating to be close to business having a direct impact on consumers instead of doing basic research. To me it is important that the research I do is used for something concrete and relevant. In addition, I like short deadlines and a fast paced work, also I believe it is a benefit that there is more money to do research when working in the industry.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
I was a student assistant at Arla doing my education, furthermore, I had one year as scientist at DuPont. Both positions were highly important, especially experience from the industry at DuPont was important for my current position.

How did you find your first job/current job?
All three position (student assistant Arla, Assistant scientist DuPont, Food Scientist AFI) were found on Jobindex.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
When doing my PhD, I had a co-supervisor who was employed at Arla but I did not use this contact to get the position. At the university I was working in a group called “Milk laboratory”. Many students have after finishing their master and PhD been employed at Arla, so people know each other within this field. But I actually did not use my network to get this job.

Describe a typical day/week?

I am still new at AFI, so I do not have a complete schedule yet and a routine. I do a lot of meetings, Lab work, use time to read scientific papers and writing up reports.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
The ability to gain new and complex knowledge fast, read scientific papers, take initiative, work independently, do critical thinking and managing skills.

What skills would you say you did not develop during your PhD, which you have developed afterwards?
I work in a new way and I am only a small part of a project. During the PhD I had to plan, execute, analyze and present, so now I have to learn to think differently.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
I would have taken other PhD courses that were more relevant to the industry, general competency courses like project management. I would also have liked a greater insight and knowledge of the industry.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
My advice would be: Remember there is a life after you finish your PhD. Take relevant courses like project management and GMP which will make your job profile look sharp. Look for jobs well in advance. Familiarize yourself with where you can apply for jobs, collaborate with the industry if possible. Find job ads and look at the skills they seek for and try to make them part of your profile making you fit for the jobs you would like to occupy once your PhD is finished.

Stine Julie Hyldal Tingskov

Education:
2012-2015: PhD in Physics
2010-2012: MSc in Physics

Jobs:
2020-Present: Structured Trader, InCommodities
2019-2020: Quantitative Analyst, Centrica
2016-2019: Quantitative Analyst, Neas Energy A/S
2016: CEO & Co Founder, Capillatus Technologies Development

Rune Elgaard – Structured Trader – InCommodities

What kind of position do you have today?
Today I work as a structured trader where we trade energy resources, mainly natural gas in Europe. We analyze the market and try to predict how the prices will fluctuate.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
I knew almost at the beginning of my PhD that starting a business was one of my big dreams. The experience and process of building a business and selling a product was something I wanted to try. My business partner and I had an idea to make a special kind of lightning rod for windmills. Initially, we focused on trying to sell the product before it was even fully developed. You can spend years in a basement finetuning a product but what is it worth if you have no customers?

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
People were very interested in our product; however, our idea was kind of crazy. After seeing other entrepreneurs and how much they had to hustle to build and expand their businesses, it became very clear that we did not want to spend the next many years doing that. According to an investigation conducted by MIT, it was also clear that to be a successful startup you need experience and a network in the business. The mean age for success was 42 years old with a standard deviation of 6 years.
Instead, I knew I had a great education and exploited that to find a good job. Intuitively I felt finance would be interesting, and it has really grown on me.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
I worked as a quantitative analyst before I started working as a trader. That's a very natural route in finance. After three or four years as an analyst, you must decide whether you want to stay on as an analyst or become a trader. A regular thing in industry, if you want a bump up in your career is to switch companies. Furthermore, I think the company I switched to is the future in our sector. It is much more fun to be part of an industry that is in development rather than in decline.

How did you find your first job/current job?
The company contacted me and invited me to come by for a talk because they had heard about me. Then it ended up with a job offer.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
I knew a few people at my current company which is how they knew about me.

Describe a typical day/week?

At 8 AM the market opens so I meet in half an hour beforehand to orient myself regarding news and prices. The first half an hour after 8 AM is hectic with trading, where after it calms down and I spend more time reading relevant news articles. Sometimes I code a bit in python looking at historical patterns or automatic investing algorithms. Otherwise, I may have a few meetings. The market closes at 6 PM but usually, you work around 8 hours and not the full market day. There's a lot of focus on work balance so people do not burn out.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
Communication of difficult quantitative topics and the understanding of numbers and correlations. I have always thought the main difference between a PhD and a master is becoming comfortable understanding and researching topics on your own and thereby developing a certain kind of independence.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
There are many differences. You no longer have the same time to dive into new topics. Finance and physics are very different, and the lingo and skills are quite unalike. It was kind of like starting over. I spent a lot of time catching up. However, sometimes I also think it can be an advantage to see things differently when coming from another background than your colleagues.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
It's too easy to say I should have coded more or attended some finance courses. I'm pretty satisfied with the choices I've made.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Generally, figure out what you can do and what your skills are, so you can apply for jobs before you finish your PhD. Most people look for a job long before they finish their education. People in Copenhagen seem to know this, but it is like Aarhus missed that cue.
I have two additional pieces of advice:

1) It is very important which kind of boss you get. Even though you might have a nice boss it doesn't necessarily make him a good leader. If you are eager to develop, you need someone who knows how to get people to grow.
2) **This is the most important advice:** I have seen a lot of people with a PhD background breaking down because of stress, a lot more than I could imagine. Usually, you think it is another kind of people that get stressed, but it is not. It is so important to know when to say stop so you don't overburden yourself.

Simon Vindbæk Jensen

Education:
PhD in Science and Technology
MSc Molecular Biology

Jobs:
2016-Present: Head of Laboratory, Faba Bean Breeder

Winnie Füchtbauer – Head of Laboratory – Faba Bean Breeder

What kind of position do you have today?
Head of laboratory in a biotech laboratory in a plant breeding company. The main task is optimization and troubleshooting in a biotech lab, where approx. 15 technicians work.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
About 3 months before handing in my PhD.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
I wanted to get away from academia, because there was too much paper and application writing, and too little actual science. I also wanted to work with plants (this has always been my main interest) in a way where I could see that my work made a difference and had an impact. This was something I missed in academia, where the prospects of your work being used are often many years away.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
Not after my PhD. I did work at a breeding station (not the one I work at now) as a seasonal worker prior to my university studies. I took this job because I was (already then) interested in plant breeding, and the job did not scare me off.

How did you find your first job/current job?
I sent an unsolicited application, because I was very interested in a job at the company. Luckily, they had just gotten a large grant for a new project and were looking for someone with my profile. So pure luck.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
I had two colleagues in my PhD group who started working at the company during my PhD. Furthermore, I had worked with their competitors prior to university, so I already knew they existed. But I contacted my former colleagues before sending the application in order to hear a bit about the place.

Describe a typical day/week?
I meet rather early (about 6:30) and answer emails. At 7:30 we have a daily meeting, updating each other. Until the coffee break at 9 I usually take a round and pass by all technicians/ gardeners in the laboratory department, to hear their plan for the day and any issues they might have. After that, a typical day varies extremely depending on the season. In the summer, I spend most of my time in the field, in the winter I spend most of my time in the lab. I try to solve the everyday issues that arise so the technicians can focus on the production and prioritize the workload so we get everything done in time.
Other than that, I spend quite some time on data analysis.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
The most important skill is to remain calm when things don't go according to plan, because they seldom do during a PhD (and worklife afterwards). A PhD teaches you to plan and coordinate a really large project by yourself, this is a really important skill in many different jobs. I also learned to approach strangers at conferences in order to learn more and extend my network. This can be frightening but is an important skill every time you start a new job.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
During my PhD I had way too much focus on the very specific topic I worked with and did not see this work in the greater picture. This is very important if you work with more applied science, and also enables you to see connections between your work and similar work in other fields which can give you really great new ideas.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
I would have had more focus on how my work could be useful in "the real world". I started my PhD directly after my bachelor and did not spend a lot of time investigating the subject. I thought the beauty of basic science was that you don't know where it leads you. Retrospect I could have done much more interesting work had I focused the work more towards a possible goal.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Don't stress so much about the content of your PhD – most companies don't really care what your PhD is about. They are more impressed by the fact that you made it all the way through without running away screaming.
Focus on networking and conferences - nobody has ever asked me how many papers I managed to publish but getting to know people in a field you want to work in really makes a huge difference. Most people would much rather hire somebody they have talked to a bit more than just two job interviews.

Tine Billeskov

Education:
2013-2018: PhD in Health Science
2012-2015: MSc in Biology

Jobs:
2021-Present: Senior Scientist and Project Manager, Gubra
2020: Key Account Manager, Gubra
2019: Research Scientist (Gubra)

Michael Christensen – Senior Scientist and Project Manager – Gubra

What kind of position do you have today?
Senior research scientist. Key account manager and project coordinator.
Study director for in vivo studies including customer contact, involvement in drug development projects and responsible for development of new renal models. Gubra (CRO), biotech company.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
Before applying for the PhD. Michael desired a job in the industry within life science and a PhD is a good way to go in that direction.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
To gain the possibility to work with various things of personal interest. Michael has a strong interest in how the body works, how illnesses develop and how to cure them. With this strong interest within health science the possibilities for a suitable job is increased with a PhD in the field.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
No.

How did you find your first job/current job?
By contacting several managers within *in vivo* pharmacology at Gubra. Called them to discuss if they had any open positions and make them aware of his existence. Applied for an open position, which he did not get, subsequently Gubra called with another open position, which was suitable for Michael.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
No prior contacts, before the first approach.

Describe a typical day/week?
Designing and planning *in vivo* pharmacology studies
Contributing to internal drug development projects
Key account managing
Close contact with customers
Internal logistics (Technicians etc.)
Collecting data and deliver final reports

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
Project management skills
Understanding of kidney diseases

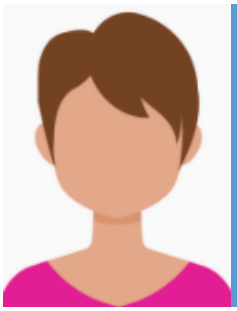
Collaborative skills

What skills would you say you did not develop during your PhD, which you have developed afterwards?
Drug development skills
Business development skills (Business vs. Academia)

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
Increased collaboration internally and externally (University and Industry) to increase the efficiency- and quality of research while gaining a bigger network

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Be open to moving for jobs or to work remotely
Focus on translatable skills obtained during the PhD
What are the employer looking for and in which way can you apply your skills to this position?
Start thinking about your possibilities before you are done with the PhD
Try to adjust your skillset by taking PhD courses etc. That makes you attractive to employers.

Michael Schou Jensen



Education:
2016-2021: PhD in Gastroenterology
2007:2013: Medical doctor

Jobs:
Present: Pharmaceutical Medicine Physician, Novo Nordisk

Petra Weimers – Pharmaceutical Medicine Physician – Novo Nordisk

What kind of position do you have today?
Pharmaceutical medicine physician at Novo Nordisk, assigned to a 2-year programme where I am presented to 3 of the different legs Novo offers physicians – Medical & Science, Medical Affairs, and Safety. I will spend 8 months in each place.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
Halfway through the PhD.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
My parents are both in the industry, so I grew up with it and sort of knew the basics about it. My mother is in medical affairs, so I was not a total stranger to the industry.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
I had several jobs as a clinician, but only for shorter periods of time. Never in the industry before.

How did you find your first job/current job?
I went to an open house for medical doctors, held at Novo. I talked to a couple of people there and started thinking about going in that direction. I knew a woman who had applied to this program and talked to her about what it entailed. It sounded interesting, so I applied and got the position.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
I knew a woman who was already enrolled in the program. And I had attended this aforementioned open house at Novo.

Describe a typical day/week?
When I was at medical & science, my job consisted of writing protocols for huge trials, writing abstracts for studies done by Novo, and assessing study designs. It was a job where I very much used my skills obtained through my PhD. When I moved on to Medical Affairs where I am presently at, my job shifted to being more internationally minded. I have meetings with international stakeholders from different continents, and it includes a certain amount of traveling abroad and entertaining international visitors. I plan communication and medical education, for example by planning seminars or symposiums on certain topics, for instance diabetic retinopathy or pediatric obesity. I have to decide on the content of the slide shows used for the presentations given, so I have to be deep in the literature and to know who's who in the international field of the specific topics. I find speakers for these symposiums and communicate with them about their personal desires – do they for instance wish to bring their own slide show, do they wish for us to make it, and so on.

This specific department is not a place where I use my medical education so much, or my PhD for that matter. I haven't been to Safety yet, so I don't yet know the details of the job. I know that I will be receiving feedback on side effects of our products, both products that are already on the market, as well as in trials.

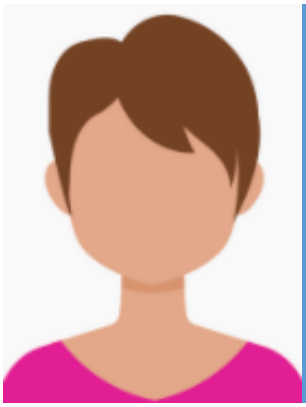
What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
Scientific approach, and ability to engage in new and to me unknown topics.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
Nothing.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Get on LinkedIn. When you see interesting jobs, but don't understand any of the words or specific tasks they ask for, call the contact person and ask! Don't be afraid to reach out to people and ask for a coffee and a chat.

Thea Vestergaard

PhDs working in the public sector



Education:
PhD in Molecular Genetics from University of Copenhagen
MSc in Biochemistry from University of Copenhagen

Jobs:
2021-Present: Head of Department, Dept. of Molecular Medicine (AUH)
2012-2020: Sr. Staff Scientist at Illumina (San Diego)
2012: Staff Scientist at Millennium Laboratories (San Diego)
2011-2012: Senior Scientist at Enigma Diagnostics (San Diego)
2003-2008: Team leder, Senior Scientist at Hvidovre Hospital
2001-2003: Post Doc. at Roskilde University
2000-2001: Post Doc. at University Medical Center Utrecht (Holland)

Anne Charlotte Jäger – Head of Department – Dept. of Molecular Medicine (AUH)

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?
It was kind of a natural transition as my first job after the PhD was a result of a collaboration during my PhD.

What kind of position do you have today?
I am currently the head of department at Dept. of Molecular Medicine at Aarhus University Hospital. Before this, I worked at Illumina in San Diego as senior staff scientist.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
I applied for a job as senior scientist at Hvidovre Hospital after a few short-term post doc positions. I wished to work with genetic analysis and be close to the clinic and patients.
When I moved to the US with my husband, I quickly find out that I wished to work at Illumina. I got an interview, but did not get the job. I then had two positions in smaller companies. When another position opened up at Illumina, I applied and then got the job.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
I worked as a senior scientist at Illumina for 8 years. Here, a led multiple large highly collaborative teams providing technical leadership and management through development, optimization, validation and product launch of clinical genomics assays. I have been told, that I would probably not have been offered this job if I did not have a PhD. My PhD, in combination with experience from two American start-up companies was essential for my job at Illumina.

After my family's decision to go back to Denmark, I stumbled upon the job as head of department at Dept. of Molecular Medicine. This looked like a perfect job for me, as I could implement my experience in leadership and technical knowledge of sequencing approaches and genetic analysis from Illumina and my time at Hvidovre Hospital.

How did you find your first job/current job?
My first jobs after my PhD were a result of some existing collaborations from my PhD, but were temporary. I applied for the job as senior scientist at Hvidovre Hospital because I wished to work with genetic analysis and be close to the clinic and patients.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
I did not have any previous contacts at any of my jobs in the US.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
I think one of the most important generic skills you learn during you PhD, is to work independently with responsibility for your own project. You have to handle all the hurdles that come along the way, which can be quite challenging. By writing papers and handing in your thesis, you prove that you are able to deliver results and structured. These are all skills and experiences that are very important in many job positions.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
I think *leadership* is one of the skills that I use the most today, which I did not learn during my PhD. I supervised younger students during my PhD, and this might be my very early steps towards my interest for people management and leadership. But I would say that it is a skill that I learned at my later jobs.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?
It has been a long time. As I remember, I was quite happy during my PhD studies and feel like I got the most out of my time as a PhD student. I could probably have benefitted from more statistical knowledge, but it has not been a major issue.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Use your network to connect with people with interesting jobs. They might not have a job available for you, but they might be able to point you in a direction or connect you to other relevant people and companies.
Once in a while, take a moment to stop and think about what you want. Do you like your current job situation and how does you professional life align with your personal life? It is really important to consider if and when it is time for a change.
If you wish to apply for a job in another country, get help to write and adapt your CV and application. The structure and content might be very different from what we do in Denmark.

Amanda Johansen

Education:
2010: Diploma of Specialized Journalism (1 year of leave from work to study at the Danish School of Media and Journalism)
2006: PhD in Medicine, Dept. of Medical Biochemistry, Aarhus University
2002: MSc in Molecular Biology, Aarhus University

Jobs:
2017- Present: Research Communicator/Consultant, NIDO | Danmark, Regional Hospital West Jutland.
2012-2017: Fundraiser, Research Support Office, Aarhus University and Aarhus University Hospital.
2006-2011: Post Doc., Dept. of Medical Biochemistry, Aarhus University.

Marianne Jensby Bornemann – Research Communicator/Consultant – NIDO | Danmark

What kind of position do you have today?
Marianne is employed as a research communicator/consultant at NIDO | Danmark, the centre for research and education at Regional Hospital West Jutland.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
As a PhD student, Marianne had her mind set on a research career, and continued within academic research as a postdoctoral fellow immediately after the completion of her PhD. About halfway through the postdoc, she started to question if this was the right career path for her and considered which parts of her job, she enjoyed the most. She wanted to expand her knowledge and competencies within journalism and dissemination of popular science, which led to one-year leave of absence from her postdoc position to study Specialized Journalism at the Danish School of Media and Journalism. After the postdoc, she pursued a career path where these competencies could come more into play.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
During her three-year postdoc position, Marianne started to reflect more upon which tasks and functions she found the most interesting, and where she could see herself in a long-term perspective. She realised that she had always been very drawn towards the communicative tasks, and therefore, she specifically obtained new qualifications within this field by studying Specialized Journalism.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
After her academic career as a PhD and postdoc, Marianne was employed as a fundraiser at the Research Support Office at Aarhus University. Here, she supported researchers in their fundraising process with guidance and feedback in the preparation of applications and budgets. This job specifically provided Marianne with experience of being in a supporting/servicing job position and made her more aware of which specific tasks within the communicative field that she enjoyed the most.

How did you find your first job/current job?
By the end of her second maternity leave, where Marianne was employed at the Research Support Office, she started to look for a job that could bring new and different challenges. She found the vacancy at NIDO as a regular job ad and applied for the position as a research communicator/consultant.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?

Marianne had not heard of NIDO in advance, nor did she have any contacts affiliated with the centre.

Describe a typical day/week?
The core task of the job is to support and guide researchers affiliated with the hospital in all relevant communicative aspects, including both written and oral dissemination. The tasks primarily cover drafting and reviewing of protocols and research articles, guiding presentations, organising seminars and workshops. However, the typical day is often very versatile, where Marianne has quite a lot of contact with the communication department and also gets involved in ad hoc duties of both communicative and administrative character.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
To Marianne, it is key to be able to plan and manage both time and assignments independently. She benefits from her insights into the process from idea generation, through planning, to execution. Additionally, she highly draws on her general knowledge and experience with the research world, including her own fundraising, as well as knowing the methodologies and mindset of researchers.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
During the PhD, Marianne did not gain competencies within dissemination of popular science. However, she afterwards obtained specific tools and knowledge about this field during her study at the Danish School of Media and Journalism. Her current job is mainly a supportive function, which demands an eager to and mindset for servicing others. Such skills are not necessarily developed during the PhD, where you are deeply focused on your own project and might lack awareness of the bigger organisation in which you are part of.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
Marianne has very little regret when it comes to her career path. The steps along the way, from the PhD time to her current position, have been a natural maturation process, where she stepwise figured out what needed to change for the next chapter. However, she emphasises that she never had an environmental change, which she finds to be a relevant and beneficial experience to have had.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Do not spend the entire time with your nose deeply into the project trail of your PhD. Look up from time to time and consider which tasks you enjoy the most on an everyday basis, without solely focusing on the finish line. Take your time during the PhD, to talk to alumni, participate in career fairs, etc., so you are forced to make active thoughts about your future career path.

Dianna Buus Hussmann

Education:
2013: PhD in Neuroscience, Dept. of Biomedicine, Aarhus University
2008: MSc in Engineering, Medical Biotechnology, Aalborg University

Jobs:
2020- Present: Biochemist, Region Midtjylland, Vest
2014-2020: Assistant Professor, Dept. of Biomedicine, Aarhus University
2013-2014: Post-doctoral Researcher, Dept. of Biomedicine, Aarhus University

Cristine Betzer – Biochemist – Region Midtjylland

What kind of position do you have today?
Cristine is working as Biochemist at Clinical Biochemical Department at the Regional Hospital in Gødstrup. The primary focus of this department is to receive and analyze patient blood samples for a wide range of components. Cristine works as a team leader where her tasks are divided into three areas: hematology, electrophoresis assays, and point of care testing (POCT). Her responsibilities are centered around quality assurance, validation, and optimization of clinical tests within the three areas mentioned. In addition, Cristine is doing research, writing articles, and teaching within the same areas.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
The first career step for Cristine after finishing the PhD was to continue in a position as a post-doctoral researcher and later assistant professor in the same group where she conducted her PhD study. This position allowed her to work with research on a more independent level and expand her scientific competences. She really enjoyed, that she was able to explore and get knowledge within many different techniques and methods ranging from cell and protein work all the way up to animal studies.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose? And how did they lead to your current job?
After spending 13 years at Aarhus University, Cristine wished to apply her competences within a different area than academic research. She had also thought about continuing in academia, but based on her current experience, it was not realistic for her to obtain a tenure track position at Aarhus University. Furthermore, the COVID-19 lockdown also made Cristine personally aware that it was time to change her geographic work location, to reduce the number of hours spent traveling back and forth to work. All this combined made her explore options outside the university.

How did you find your first job/current job? What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
Cristine started looking for her current position two years before her university contract would end. She actively explored the job market by adding her profile and CV on job ad pages, and by actively applying for posted job positions once or twice per month. She primarily looked for job ads within quality assurance, where the geographical location matched Cristine's priorities. Her current job as biochemist was obtained by sending in an ordinary job application for a posted job advertisement. She did not have any contacts at the Hospital or the department before she applied.

Describe a typical day/week?
The number one priority for Cristine is always to secure accurate handling and analysis of patient blood samples; everything related to this is 'must do' tasks of the day. As a Biochemist this involves quality testing of the equipment and robots in addition to writing reports. Cristine is currently involved in moving the site from one location to another, where she is involved in making sure that both old and newly purchased

equipment can analyze clinical samples accurately. She is also involved in purchasing new equipment, setting it up, and making sure that they can run clinical samples within ISO accreditation.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
Skills in relation to project management are essential for Cristine today. A strong competence achieved during the PhD is also the ability to quickly obtain and use new knowledge. This includes the ability to search for scientific literature and understand it, and the ability to quickly acquaint oneself within areas you do not already hold technical expertise in. As Cristine is also doing research, her researcher skills, and the ability to develop new things are also very beneficial for her today. Another thing her PhD study taught her, is the importance of being able to make a decision and stick to it even when others might disagree.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
More focus on standardization and its importance within the clinical setting. Plus, more focus on when and how big significant differences must be before it is clinically relevant.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
For Cristine it is perhaps not doing the PhD, but maybe before starting the PhD she would have liked to have done something differently. Today she thinks it would have been beneficial to have more experience before starting the PhD (she started directly after her master), because as she said, 'the world simply gets bigger when you try something new'. For her this also reflects what she did after her PhD; here she decided to continue in the same group, looking at it now, she would have liked to gain experiences from different places.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Do not fear to contact people you do not know, and do not hesitate to use your network.

Karen Marie Juul Sørensen

Education:
2016: PhD Molecular Medicine
2009: MSc in Molecular Biology
2002: Laboratory technician

Jobs:
2017- Present: Assistant Professor/Lecturer at Business Academy Aarhus
2017: Highschool teacher at HTX (temporary position)
2016: Internship at Business Academy Aarhus

Christina Ane E. Sølvsten – Lecturer/Assistant Professor – Business Academy Aarhus

What kind of position do you have today?
Christina is employed at the Business Academy in Aarhus as an assistant professor/Lecturer. She is about to finish a 4-year continuing education to become an Associate Professor. As a lecturer at the Business Academy, she primarily teaches students but as a part of her employment she also has to do smaller research projects which she can use in her teaching.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
After her Master's degree in molecular biology, she had an temporary employment as a high school teacher and realized that teaching could be a possible future job opportunity. However, with "only" a Master's degree in molecular biology, a permanent employment at a high school would not be easy, and she thought that the experience from a PhD could be beneficial towards a career as a lecturer for higher education.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
She is passionate about teaching and enjoy the connection she gets to the students during teaching.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
She had a temporary position as a high school teacher for one year. Before that position, she had an internship for 4 weeks at the Business Academy, which made her to her current position, as the Business Academy one year after could offer her an employment.

How did you find your first job/current job?
She submitted an unsolicited application for the Business Academy and got 4 weeks internship.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
She did not have any contacts besides she knew the place as she had been a former Student of the school.

Describe a typical day/week?
Not two weeks are identical, and some weeks are busier than others. She does not have a predefined schedule for more than 2 months ahead. One week can be filled with teaching in the laboratory and another filled with classroom teaching in theoretic knowledge or feedback to student's assignments. During the year, she also goes on study trips with the students to visit different companies.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
She benefits from the teaching experience during her PhD, but also the technical skills she achieved during laboratory experiments as well as topical skills as she uses her specific topic knowledge from her PhD in her teaching.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
Teaching experience and skills was developed before and during the PhD.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
Nothing in regard to be a teacher

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Use your network. Contact and talk to people to get connections and show who you are (e.g., with internships) so they remember you.

Katrine Bilde

Education:
MSc in Physiology, McGill University, Montreal, Canada
PhD in Physiology, McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Jobs:
2015-Present: Associate Professor at TNU/PET Center, AU
2012-2014: Assistant Professor at CFIN/PET Center, AU
2007-2012: Post doc. at CFIN/PET Center, AU 2007-2009: Post doc. at University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

Anne M. Landau – Associate Professor – TNU/PET Center AU

What kind of position do you have today?
I currently hold the position of Associate Professor in Translational Neuroscience at the Translational Neuropsychiatry Unit and PET Center at the Department of Clinical Medicine at Aarhus University where I lead a research group of postdocs and graduate students in preclinical neuroscience research and brain imaging.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
I spent the last year of my PhD in deep thought about what career path would be most personally exciting to me, and what lifestyle I wanted. At the time, my PhD supervisor was in the process of closing the lab due to stress, which really made me think about my future. I even met with career counsellors at McGill University where I took personality tests for guidance (scientific researcher was in the top 3 suggested careers from these tests, along with police detective and ophthalmologist). In this last year, I traveled, read, met with as many people as possible and learned about their own careers.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
My passion for understanding the brain and working towards developing new therapies solidified my intent to pursue an academic route. I had also just experienced a life-changing 3 months in a Japanese laboratory at the end of my PhD. The opportunities to travel, collaborate and learn from different cultures are incredible perks of an academic career and lifestyle, and factored in to my decision to pursue a postdoc abroad.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
I followed a traditional academic path of holding a few postdoc positions prior to being promoted to assistant professor and then associate professor.

How did you find your first job/current job?
Towards the end of my PhD, I reached out to a Professor at University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, since I had admired his work, and Vancouver is a fantastic city. He told me that he was about to retire and had no funding, but he forwarded my email to his close colleague and she contacted me immediately and invited me to interview in Vancouver. She and I applied for funding and I received postdoctoral fellowships from both Canadian and Danish foundations (since she had been on sabbatical in Denmark at the time). During my first years in Denmark, I made important contacts that helped me to eventually secure my current position. It was some difficult years, some of my contracts were quite short and depended on my receiving external funding. There was a large element of luck involved, the external funding awards and then the opening of my position after a colleague retired came at the right times.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?

I had none. Once I was put in touch with the Professor in Vancouver, and then applied for funding with her and moved to Denmark, I was fortunate to make several important Danish and international connections that are still important to me now, 14 years later.

Describe a typical day/week?
I spend a lot of my time meeting with my students, which is my favorite thing to do. As the years go on, I am spending less time in the laboratory and increasing amounts of time on writing papers and grant applications, which can be less fun. I enjoy a relatively flexible schedule, but my work days do not end at 4pm and I am not free on weekends. My partner is also a scientist, and I am in constant contact with my students, and collaborators from abroad, and so together with a number of deadlines, the lines between work, family life and time off are blurred.

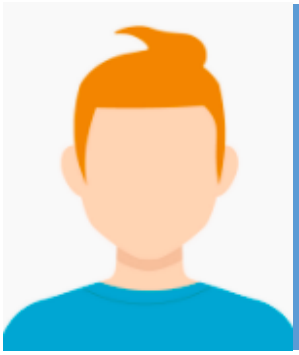
What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
The ability to think critically and problem solve.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
Once you finish your PhD and work towards becoming an independent researcher with your own group, you require skills in team management and project financing. Stress management strategies are also important to develop over time.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
My PhD was a combination of work in cell culture, animal models and with human samples. This interdisciplinary approach allowed me to explore different methods and ultimately led me to my current field, and I am happy with where I landed. That being said, in current times, having a strong international network is extremely important, and I would have liked to have developed more contacts during my PhD.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
An academic career in Health can be very rewarding, you get to answer questions that are personally exciting to you with the opportunity to make a difference in the treatment of disease, and you get to contribute to the future success of your trainees; however, this can take up a lot of space in your life. It is competitive, there aren't enough positions or funding, and you deal with a lot of rejection from journals, funding agencies, etc. Only do this if you are passionate about your research area. There is also nothing wrong with trying something and then changing your mind. There are so many opportunities now for people with PhDs, talk to as many people as you can, and explore all options.

Karina Binda



Education:
2015-2018: PhD at the research center CREATES, Aarhus University. Specialization in macroeconomics, econometrics, and finance
2010-2014: Cand.scient.oecon with specialty in macroeconomics and econometrics, Aarhus University
2007-2010: Bachelor in Mathematical Economics, Aarhus University

Jobs
Present: Economy Adviser in The Ministry of Taxes, Denmark
2010-2021: Instructor/teacher at The Faculty of Science, Aarhus University
2015-2016: Instructor/teacher in the subject Mathematical Economics I & Principles of Empirical Research Methods, BSS, Aarhus University
2015: Research Assistant under Nicholas Kiefer, Aarhus University

Mads Khoa-Dang Dang – Economy Advisor – The Ministry of Taxes, Denmark

What kind of position do you have today?
I work as an economy advisor in the ministry of taxes, Denmark. The position entails work as project manager of new methods concerning the relationship between taxation and the overall economy in Denmark.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
I started thinking about the next step around the halfway mark of my PhD. This is a rather normal approach in my field, and I regularly consulted with my fellow colleagues and my supervisors about potential career directions after my PhD.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you choose?
I wanted to prioritize job security most of all. After that, a stable job environment also affected my choice. Therefore, I knew that the public sector would suit my preferences. It didn't matter if it was in the ministry of education, taxation or finance, because I knew that all three places would fit my capabilities but also challenge me. The working hours and load suited my idea of what I wanted in a job. I choose not to apply for jobs in the private sector due to the fluctuating environment where it can be expected to bring the work home. Also, private companies in my field work in smaller and more unstable groups and projects.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?
No this is my first job outside academia after my PhD.

How did you find your first job/current job?
As many others, I found it in a job posting through many of the different databases such as jobindex. I did talk with my peers about their experiences, but fortunately I was able to find a job the regular way.

What contacts- if any, did you have at the place before you started?
None.

Describe a typical day/week
I work in teams of 10-20 people, and usually the work day is very hectic because we have many different deadlines, that we have to meet. When working in the public sector, a lot of people depend on the outcome of our work, most deadlines are short. A typically day consists of communication between colleges and other

groups to meet these deadlines, but also to plan ahead towards bigger projects in the future. My work needs to be structured by myself and multitasking is a key competence to meet the demands of the position.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
My PhD was structured as a very independent project, where I was able to decide when and how I worked. The ability to have an *overview* and a *structure* of the tasks ahead was essential to perform well throughout my PhD. As mentioned earlier, *multitasking* is a must due to the many different assignments that occurs at the same time. Being able to be *independent*, and exercise *self-control* and *self-discipline* were also important. It is always difficult to work in an environment where you have to find a way to get the job done without being guided in every step. You risk working too much or too little, and you also have to motivate yourself to keep going. Last but not least, my *problem-solving* ability prepared me well for my current job.

What skills would you say you didn't develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
I would say that project management with many different people. Working in my environment, you need to coordinate your work with several others. Also, there is a long way from an idea to a finished product/method and the task can only be completed if everyone works in tandem. I realized that I needed to be more precise and targeted with my work to deliver what is expected of me. This is in contrast to academia where many things are more theoretical. I also became better at conveying my results to other people.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
I felt I was prepared to enter my job from the first day. In my current field, the transition is quite smooth. Of course, you develop more and different competences when you switch direction, but in my case my PhD prepared me well.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
Remember that academia is just one path. For many it is the only path because they don't realize that you can step outside of it. Have the courage to do something different. If you have any doubt whether it is the right direction for you, it is definitely worth to search for opportunities outside the small bubble that is academia. I don't regret doing the transition at all.

Thien Luong

Education:
2014: PhD in Medicine, Health, Aarhus University.
2003: MSc in Anthropology, Arts, Aarhus University.

Jobs:
2021-Present: Associate Professor, Dept. of Clinical Medicine, Aarhus University.
2018 - Present: Senior Researcher, DEFACTUM, Central Denmark Region.
2016-2021: Senior Researcher, Center for Fetal Diagnostics, Aarhus University Hospital.
2014-18: Researcher, DEFACTUM, Central Denmark

Stina Lou – Associate Professor and Senior Researcher – Aarhus University and DEFACTUM

What kind of position do you have today?
I am a senior researcher at Defactum, which is a regional research institution, and then I am an associate professor in clinical anthropology at the Department of Clinical Medicine at Aarhus University. I spend two days per week at the Center for Fetal diagnostics at Aarhus University Hospital.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?
I am an anthropologist by training and when I left the university then, I was sure that I never wanted to go into research. I wanted to be "out in the real life" and make a difference for real people. My first job was at the Department of Epidemiology at Aarhus University where I was a research assistant. I did a small interview study on pregnant women's attitudes to prenatal screening. I loved the study, but this job confirmed that the research environment was not for me. People were super-nice, but I felt they were working a lot by themselves and doing their own things. It was really far from how I wanted to work and to make a difference. However, what I did find out was that I really enjoyed the challenges and rewards of working in a completely different working environment and with people thinking in scientific ways that were quite different from those that I was trained in. I discovered my joy for interdisciplinary work and my passion for pregnancy and childbirth as a research topic.

I got the employment at Defactum and worked as a project manager in public health for some years, before the institution decided to become more of a research institution, and I was encouraged to embark on a PhD. By that time, I had come to appreciate how research can make a difference, and I knew then that I wanted to work interdisciplinary and with pregnancy and childbirth afterwards if possible.

How early did you start thinking about your next career step after the PhD?
The PhD was an opportunity to strengthen my professional skills to be able to match the physicians and researchers – all with PhD's – that I wanted to collaborate with at the hospital. Therefore, the PhD was also a strategic move to enable me to pursue a further career in hospital-based clinical anthropology.

During my PhD, I think that I have been good at taking chances and grapping opportunities and to work that little bit extra sometimes if needed to be able to pursue the opportunities that arose, such as writing proposals for smaller qualitative research project or supervise health professionals with an interest in qualitative methods.

How did you find your first job/current job?
I was lucky to be employed at Defactum before and after the PhD, which I finished in 2014. During and after the PhD, I started meeting up with two physicians – now professors – from the specialties of prenatal genetics and fetal medicine. We met once a month after work to discuss collaborative projects. In 2016, we created

the Center for Fetal Diagnostics at Aarhus University Hospital with funding from the Novo Nordisk Foundation. When that grant ran out earlier this year, I was fortunate to get part time employment at Department of Clinical Medicine at Aarhus University.

What contacts – if any, did you have at the company/workplace/university before you started?
I did a lot of networking during my PhD by reaching out to people in the clinic, talking to them about my research, being very open about it, discussing my interpretations and my thoughts. I am still benefitting from this. During my PhD, I did five months of fieldwork at the Fetal Medicine Unit, so I have an understanding of everyday life in fetal medicine, which makes me able to ask relevant questions and identify relevant topics for research. I also knew few obstetricians at Aarhus University Hospital from my time at the Department of epidemiology at Aarhus University. So even though it had been six years since I left epidemiology, I reached out to them when I started thinking about the PhD. Luckily, they remembered me and were very supportive of my research ideas. I think it was a huge advantage for an anthropologist-outsider like me to have somebody in the environment who vouched for me and opened doors for me.

Describe a typical day/week?
Today I have supervised a PhD student who is about to submit her first paper. We talked a little about the frustrations of the submission process. I have done two telephone interviews for a research project I am doing on retinoblastoma (a rare type of eye cancer), and I have been working on a paper of my own. Later on, I am going to spend time on planning some teaching that I am doing next week, I have to make changes in the material. In both institutions where I work, I do research, I write grant applications (in collaboration of course), I teach, and I do supervision.

What skills and experiences from your PhD studies do you have the most benefit of today?
Because I had worked for quite a while as a project manager and consultant, I felt like I already had those project management/leadership skills. Therefore, for me, it was the deep professional competences in anthropology and in conducting anthropology in medicine that was a huge boost for me and where I really learned from working with my clever supervisors and research colleagues.
The PhD has been the foundation for what I do today.

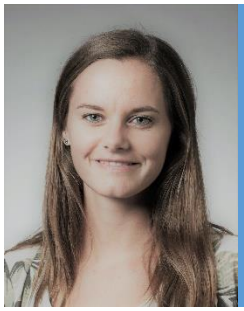
What skills would you say you did not develop during your PhD, which you have developed afterwards?
I have developed my supervision skills and I have further developed my knowledge about my research field. I have been trying to branch further out into genetics, rare diseases, pregnancy and childbirth and thereby widen my skills in different medical specialties. I have worked on becoming a better writer, and right now, I want to improve my skills in writing the big applications.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything) considering your current career?
I think I made a lot of detours in my PhD. I did a lot of extra work. I felt frustrated trying to combine anthropology and being clinically relevant – interdisciplinary work is difficult, and I struggled to find my place. My papers took forever to write but I do not think that I could have bypassed that process. I had so many doubts during the writing process, although all my supervisors did a very good job, I guess it is just part of the PhD process to take wrong turns and spend time on the wrong things. My PhD process was quite imperfect, and I think that was a big part of my learning.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?
My advice is to say yes. To dare to do something that you are not completely certain that you can do and put in the extra work. Grab the opportunities that arise and maybe look for opportunities in unexpected places.

I do not consider myself a particularly good 'networker', but I have realized that a network is much bigger than you think, if you dare to reach out. Someone that you met two years ago at a course could be a collaboration opportunity.

Mette Lauge Kristensen



Education:
2016-2020: PhD in Molecular Medicine
2013-2015: MSc in Molecular Medicine

Jobs:
Molecular Biologist at The Department of Pathology at Vejle Hospital

Trine Block Mattesen – Molecular Biologist – The Department of Pathology at Vejle Hospital

Can you tell me in which field you did your PhD?
I did my PhD at the Department of Molecular Medicine (MOMA) and it was within the field of colorectal cancer.

Can you describe me the career steps you did after your PhD?
After my PhD I had a 1-year position as a postdoc and after that, I "left" academia.

What was your motivational factors to find a job out of academia?
I wanted a more patient relevant/near job position where I could feel that I actually did a difference for the patients during a workday. Also, I wanted a permanent position and wanted to leave the competitive research environment.

Which skills acquired in your PhD are you using now in your work?
I use my analytical and critical thinking skills a lot during troubleshooting. I also use my communication and presentation skills a lot.

What is your current job?
I have a position as a molecular biologist at the department of pathology, at Vejle Hospital.
A typical day could be:

A) Check and answer mails.
B) Check the laboratory, do they have questions or need help for troubleshooting.
C) Check QC for NGS samples and decide which samples to continue with and decide sequencing setup.
D) Data analysis of NGS samples and writing answers for patients with the results.
E) Participate in meetings.

How was the transition from academic to working at a hospital?
The transition was fine. I was ready to leave academia and gain new knowledge within the diagnostic/hospital field. I was really lucky to find my new position within 3-4 months. I talked with some friends and colleagues about how to make a good application and how to prepare for a job interview.

What skills and experience you did not develop during your PhD which you have developed afterwards?
I have not tried to analyse patient data and write patient answers during my PhD. It is a huge responsibility and something that I have spent a lot of time on to learn.

Angela Herengt

Education:
PhD in cell and molecular biology at New York University Medical Center

Jobs:
- Science Communications and Collaboration for the Nordic EMBL partnership
- Chief Operating Officer at Elevate Scientific Academy
- Chief Operating Officer at an NNF-funded Research Center, Copenhagen
- Institute for Molecular Medicine, Finland
- Assistant Professor, US
- Merck Life Science Research Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow

Gretchen Pepasky – Science Communications and Collaboration – Nordic EMBL partnership

Can you briefly tell me in which field/topic you did your PhD?

I did my PhD in cell and molecular biology at New York University Medical Center (New York, USA), studying the small GTP-binding proteins aka. GTPases.

Can you describe the career steps you did after your PhD?

After my PhD I was a Merck Life Science Research Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow with Channing Der at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA). I wanted to expand my scientific knowledge, gain experience and independence in research, and study GTPases from a disease perspective. During my postdoc, I was able to do all three as well as explore my interest in science education.

After my postdoc, I held a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in the US. I was teaching and doing research with outstanding undergraduates, exactly what I had trained myself to do. Then, one day my husband said: "There's a very interesting position open in Helsinki". A new research institute was launching – the Institute for Molecular Medicine Finland or FIMM. Lucky for me, they needed someone with expertise in science education to build research training programs. We had one daughter at that time, under two years old, and we were both happy in our positions in the US, so it was really a big decision to make a move to a country where we had no network. But it was an exciting career step, and a logical one, moving from undergraduate into doctoral and postdoctoral training. And, I was able to intertwine research with training and get involved in various collaborative activities and technology development.

After eight years in Finland, I took a position as Chief Operating Officer (COO), at an NNF-funded research center at the University of Copenhagen. I managed teams in research support, including education, communication and funding, and research technology services. I then moved to a COO position at Elevate Scientific Academy, a small company offering professional development training for researchers.

Longing for closer interaction with researchers, I recently returned to the academic research setting. Now I work in science communications and collaboration building for the Nordic EMBL partnership, a position that places me in the center of four outstanding international research and technology institutes.

How did you hear about your current position? What was the recruitment process?

I was not looking for a position. One day a former colleague told me about it. I was simply in the right place at the right time, talking to the right person, who also knew me and my professional interests.

Can you describe a typical day/week of work for you?

There is no typical day and that's what I love. My work is generally divided into two parts. One is about science communication. For example, I might interview scientists and write articles about what they are doing. And the other part is about collaboration and community building which can involve events, courses, funding applications, etc.

What makes you happy in this job?

What I like in this position is that I am meeting and learning about people and their goals, and I am trying to help promote what they are doing. Also, what is really surprising me in this new position is the writing. I did not know that I would enjoy this sort of writing so much. I have written plenty of scientific papers and grant applications, and that was always okay. But the kind of writing that I am doing now is really fun. And I think one of the main things that makes me really happy is that I have space for creativity, and I work independently, but I still have teams of people with me and we do things together. And I have passionate institute directors who have high goals for tackling big research challenges. To know that I am working to support that makes me really happy.

How was the transition between academic field to private sector?

In a university, you have support systems (IT, HR, etc.). In a small company the team often does everything. Also, the goals can be different, depending on the company, and this can affect the way you work. In my case, the transition was really good, because of the team that I joined. Most in the team came from academic research positions so my colleagues kind of knew in advance the challenges I might encounter.

Which skills did you acquire in your PhD and are useful in your current work?

Communication, collaboration and team work, scientific knowledge, teaching skills and project management in the sense of being able to see a beginning, a middle and an end of a project, and having a sense of how to go through steps to complete a project efficiently.

Which skills did you needed to acquire after your PhD to do your current job?

It is a bit hard to say after so many years because now it has been over 20 years since I got my PhD. It's hard to really pinpoint where a skill came from. But I would say that I got more experience with writing and communication and collaboration. And more scientific and technological knowledge. When I did my PhD all those years ago, the research technologies were nothing like now.

How did you acquire those skills?

A lot of learning-by-doing. But I have also taken some professional skills courses. For example, I had a course in team building, how to share your ideas and how to encourage the same with other people. Also, I had a course in negotiation. I think it is a skill that is overlooked. It is about communication and about understanding what you need, what other people need and how to be able to achieve a win/win situation.

How do you feel looking back at your career? Which advice would you give to the young yourself to be prepared to the career path you had?

When I look back on my career, I am really happy. I have done a bunch of different things, and they are connected. There is a red line even if I did not plan it all out from the beginning. As for advice I would give to myself, I would say: 1) you cannot plan everything but you should explore and be open to different options and adventures. Be proactive. 2) Trust yourself and trust that you will learn from all experiences, whether they are positive, or not so positive. Everything has taught me something and contributed to the choices I made. 3) Ask questions and work openly. In my opinion, to be able to work productively with others, it is important to work openly.

Angela Herengt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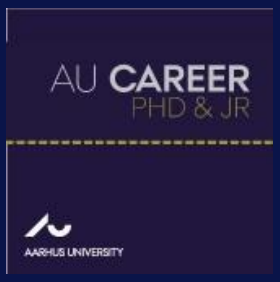
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PHD & JR
AARHUS UNIVERSITY