

WHAT DO PHDS FROM HEALTH SCIENCES DO?

Career Portraits 2020



AARHUS
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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 22 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 2020. 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 2020

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PhDs working in the private sector



Education:

2005: PhD in Neuroscience, DTU-Vet, Copenhagen University
2000: MSc in Human biology, Klinisk Biokemisk afdeling, Bispebjerg Hospital

Jobs:

2018- present: Founder and owner of Moving Science
2017-present: Scientific Animator & Illustrator, Self-employed
2014-2017: Senior Research Scientist, Lundbeck
2008-2014: Postdoc/Research Scientist, Lundbeck
2005-2008: Postdoc, Rigshospitalet
2000-2001: Research Assistant, Bispebjerg Hospital

Ann-Louise Bergström, Scientific Animator & Illustrator, Moving Science

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

Ann-Louise decided to do a PhD with the ambition of becoming a scientific researcher and working within biomedical research. Therefore, during the last part of her PhD, she spoke to her supervisor about continuing her research project in a postdoc position.

What kind of position do you have today?

Ann-Louise is a scientific animator & illustrator in her own science communication company, Moving Science. As a scientific animator & illustrator, she helps scientists and pharmaceutical companies communicate complicated scientific processes and mechanisms to a broader audience through animations and illustrations.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

She started her career in neuroscience due to her passion for scientific research. It was an exciting job and Ann-Louise loved her time at Lundbeck. However, as she with time experienced an increasingly hectic work life and a skewed work/life-balance, she decided to quit her job as a research scientist to pursue new opportunities. She has always had a passion for both science and art, which she combines in her current job as a scientific animator & illustrator.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

Yes, prior to her career in scientific communication, she had a career within neuroscience. After her PhD, Ann-Louise continued as a postdoc at Rigshospitalet to finish the research project she worked on during her PhD. Later when funding ran out, she applied for a postdoc position at Lundbeck. Due to her qualifications and research experience within neuroscience, she was offered the position at Lundbeck, where she was later promoted to Research Scientist and Senior Research Scientist.

How did you find your first job/current job?

Neuroscientist: Her first job as a postdoc was a continuation of her PhD project with her supervisor at Rigshospitalet. Later, she applied for an industrial postdoc position at Lundbeck through a job ad.

Scientific Animator & Illustrator: After she quit her job as a neuroscientist, she gave herself one year to figure out what she wanted to do. As scientific communication, or more specifically writing papers, giving presentations and making illustrations, was what she loved most about her scientific job, she contacted a science journalist to identify her own specific job opportunities. Through their conversations, Ann-Louise discovered a demand for scientific illustrations and animations and niche within visual communication of

science. However, since no jobs within this niche existed, she had to create her own job. She spent 10 months developing her technical software skills within 3D modelling and animation via online open sources, and created her own job by founding her scientific animation and illustration company, Moving Science.

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

Ann-Louise's PhD supervisor was her contact for her first postdoc position.

Describe a typical day/week:

Neuroscientist: As a scientist at Lundbeck, she worked on various research projects within different teams. She gradually gained more responsibility including university tasks for DTU and supervision of laboratory assistants and students. However, she maintained hands-on laboratory work throughout her scientific career as an important part of her job.

Scientific Animator & Illustrator: In her current job as a scientific animator & illustrator, she spends a considerable amount of time reading papers and understanding the science behind the specific animation or illustration job. She draws sketches and makes storyboards, and spends a significant amount of time in front of the computer making 3D models and animations as well as graphic illustrations. Moreover, she has frequent interaction and meetings with clients. In between animation and illustration jobs, she practices and develops her technical skills by making animations about relevant subjects, which additionally acts as advertisement for her company.

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

The skills obtained from her PhD studies and scientific career, which she benefits the most from today in her job within scientific communication, is her ability to quickly comprehend and extract the essence of complex scientific mechanisms and biological processes across scientific fields.

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

Neuroscientist: As a PhD student, you often have to work independently on your own research project. Thus, in her industry job she had to adjust to working in research teams with shared projects and common goals. In addition to further developing her research skills, with her increasing responsibility she had to master the role as supervisor for students and technical assistants.

Scientific Animator & Illustrator: Computer skills and the technical aspect of creating animations and illustrations.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

Nothing. She has had an exciting career in scientific research in which she has obtained skills essential for her current job.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

Take time to think about what kind of job you find exciting and what kind of daily life you get in a certain job. Identify the specific aspects of scientific research that you find exciting and pursue a job that entails or center around those aspects. If you wish to continue within scientific research, a postdoc is a great opportunity to harvest the results of your PhD project and write papers, which are important for your CV. If you wish to create your own company, start up next to your scientific job as it takes time to build a company, relations and a network of clients. Then at some point, you may be able to do it 100%.

Christina Valbirk Konrad



Education:
PhD in Health Sciences
MSc in Biology

Jobs:
2020- present: Taconic – Project Manager
2017-20: Stipe Therapeutics – Senior Scientist

Kasper Lisager Jønsson – Project Manager – Taconic

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

After my Part A, I started to give it some thoughts. No distinct planning just some considerations.

What kind of position do you have today?

I am a project manager at Taconic. This involves initiating and taking care of projects together with our clients. For example, if a client has a mousemodel with a special type of mouse and they want us to breed it so they will have a specific geno- and phenotype. I will be the one planning out the breeding programme. It could also be ordering of mice with specific properties such as development of disease at a specific age. I will then initiate the process and together with the design group make sure they deliver the correct mouse.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

Academia was not for me. The way of working did not really suit me and the position I would obtain in the future was not for me. I did not like the thought of being responsible for finding funding for myself and others to make sure there was enough money for people to work. Additionally, I did not like that you were alone with the responsibility of your project. I like to work in a team and together create the best solutions for a client.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

Right after the PhD, I was hired as a Senior Scientist in STipe Therapeutics, a start-up my PI had just initiated. I worked there for two year and was happy for the way this introduced me to working in the private sector. This position really initiated the process of leaving academia for good.

How did you find your first job/current job?

For the first job it was the obvious choice for leaving academia as STipe was run by my PI and they were working with something I also did my PhD. I got my current job based of a recommendation from a friend I have working at Taconic. Having done a lot of *in vivo* work, I had the profile to work with Taconic, but he also helped me out with getting this position.

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

As previously mentioned, I had a friend from my studies working there who could recommend me.

Describe a typical day/week:

As I am still relatively new in Taconic, it's a bit difficult to say what a typical day is, but it involves several things. A lot of desk work, meetings, client contact, organisation and planning and reading of scientific papers. There also writing of some applications if the client wants a mouse that has severe disease etc. The days vary a lot and each project is unique so that is really nice.

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

Keeping multiple balls in the air at a time and being able to manage many tasks at the same time. Planning of a work day and prioritizing tasks is also an important skill to have in the work that I do and I am happy to have learnt that during my PhD.

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

I would have liked to know more about financial management. I never did any of that during my PhD and therefore miss the knowledge of how much things actually cost to do in the lab. I would also have liked to know more about how businesses approach project management along with financial management and accounting.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

I would have liked to do more applications for funding and as mentioned earlier spent more time learning about the financial part of research. I think this would have been beneficial for me after the transition to industry.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

It's a tough question to answer as it depends on what they want. I would probably advice to follow their gut feeling. And to remember just because you are finishing your PhD don't panic. There is plenty of jobs for people with this type of PhD, even here in Aarhus despite people saying you have to go to Copenhagen. It can be tough to decide to leave academia, but if you just follow your gut feeling it's going to be okay.

Jacob Thyrsted Jensen



Education:
MSc in Computer Science
PhD from Health

Jobs:
2018-Present: Senior Test Engineer, Systematic
2016-2018: Test Engineer, Systematic
2014-2016: Assistant Professor, VIA University College
2009-2014: Post Doc., Department of Oncology, AUH
2006-2009: Systems Engineer, Systematic

Walther Fledelius, Senior Test Engineer at Systematic

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I started applying for jobs before finishing my PhD. I ended up finishing the PhD while working at Systematic.

What kind of position do you have today?

I am a senior test engineer at Systematic.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

While studying computer science I was interested in health care and took a minor in biology. While studying, I was a student programmer at the Department of Ophthalmology, which led to my position as PhD after finishing my master's thesis in computer science.

I continued my joint interest of computer science and health care at my first job after the PhD at Systematic, where I worked on the development of Electronic health record software (EPJ in Region Midt).

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

After 3 years at Systematic, I took a position as Post Doc at the Department of oncology, where I worked for almost 5 years. Lack of funding led me VIA University College where I was teaching and doing research.

How did you find your first job/current job?

To get my first position at Systematic I applied for the position through a job ad.

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

I did not have any previous contacts at Systematic when I got my first job there.

Describe a typical day/week:

My job varies a lot. I do a lot of testing of software, and implementation of automatic tests in the software development process. An important aspect is the follow-up testing of delivered software. Here I test if the performance of our product satisfies the customer's requirements. This could be related to speed, response time, security, and backup measures.

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

The analytical mindset and ability to review papers has helped me a lot. I makes one very detail-oriented and able to find flaws in my own and other's work, which is very important in software development. Additionally, data science/processing and statistics is something I use a lot.

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

After the PhD, I would say I have developed a lot more people and coaching skills, which is important when working in a team.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

I can't think of anything.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

Have an open mind when applying for jobs. Try something a see where you end up, you never really know where you end up and I know very few people who have ended up in a position, which they had planned for after their studies.

Casper Gammelmark Muurholm

**Education:**

2017: PhD in Health Science, Aarhus University
2012: MSc Biomedical Engineering, Aarhus University
2010: BSc Electrical Engineering, Aarhus University
2005: Electronics Technician

Jobs:

2017: Development Engineer, R&D, Kamstrup
2013: Dansk Ingeniør Service

Tommy Bechsgaard, Development Engineer, R&D, Kamstrup

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I started to plan within the last semester of my PhD program using various online job databases. I deliberately waited until the last semester to avoid having to turn down my dream job (in case the start of employment was prior to the end of my PhD program).

What kind of position do you have today?

I work at the Research and Development (R&D) Department at Kamstrup's water meter division.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

Due to my family situation, I was only looking for employment in the Aarhus area. I knew chances of getting a job within R&D in MedTech in Aarhus were poor, so I was looking for positions favoring my background in electronic engineering. Had I been offered a funded postdoc position, I would have considered the opportunity, but I was determined not to apply for funding myself. I didn't have anything specific in mind before going through the online job databases, but I was excited when I came across the job ad for my current position and I was sure that I would apply for the job.

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 after I completed my PhD.

How did you find your first job/current job?

I found my first job looking through online job databases.

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

I got in touch with two acquaintances working for Kamstrup to hear about the work environment and company values. However, they were not part of the hiring process.

Describe a typical day/week:

Kamstrup manufactures energy and utility products. I am responsible of developing and designing water meter electronics as well as assuring that the products adhere to the metrological and legislative guidelines, which includes performing various electromagnetic compatibility tests and documentation. I acquire data in the laboratory and perform data and statistical analysis to assure meter functionality. I also provide support when frontline support needs assistance with customer cases and to the production lines when needed.

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

Project management is an essential part of my job. I design experiments and methodology i.e. data acquisition and data analysis. I use my communication skills when talking to consumers and production

staff. I also use my ability to perform academic literature search of peer-reviewed articles in order to solve problems at hand. During my entire education, I have become better at acquiring new knowledge on my own, which is also very beneficial now.

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

Even though my PhD was carried out in an interdisciplinary environment, I have further developed team working and interpersonal skills.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

Knowing that Copenhagen area (i.e. the MedTech industry) was not an option for me, I could have chosen courses making my profile as an electrical engineer more attractive. It might also have been beneficial to do my PhD at the Faculty of Technical Sciences instead of Health.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

I recommend applying for jobs rather late in the PhD program in order to avoid having to turn down the dream job. This is of course dependent on the "normal" job availability in your area of work. Also, I always recommend calling the companies before applying – you need to be well prepared with a list of relevant questions and an elevator pitch. In my case, I was told by the contact person that he would write down my name and be on the lookout for my application, because he thought my profile sounded interesting.

Morten Bjørn Jensen

**Education:**

PhD from Department of Biomedicine, AU
MSc in Molecular Biology

Jobs:

2018- present: Associate Professor, School of Nursing, VIA University College
2014-2018: Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, VIA University College
2013-2014: Physiology Teacher, VIA University College

Kari Konstantin Nissen, Associate Professor/Lecturer at VIA University College

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I discovered my passion for teaching, when fulfilling my teaching obligations as a PhD student at the Department of Biomedicine at AU. The actual planning for my next career step, I only started during my last year of the PhD.

What kind of position do you have today?

I am an Associate Professor/Lecturer at VIA University College at the School of Nursing in Aarhus. Here, I teach and a part of research projects.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

As mentioned before, I did discover my passion for teaching when fulfilling my teaching obligations as a PhD student – I experienced students that were eager to learn and I enjoyed helping them to understand the curriculum. After a day of teaching, I came home and felt that I made a difference for the students – this positive feeling was lacking when coming home after a day of lab work.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

Yes, in my first job after graduation I was an external physiology teacher at VIA University College, where I have been teaching occupational therapists. This job was very important to get a foot in the door and to get to know the values and work practices at VIA University College. Furthermore, my direct leader in this position provided me with a good recommendation for the following position.

How did you find your first job/current job?

My first job as external teacher at VIA University College, I found through a former fellow PhD student, who gave me a phone call and made me aware that VIA University College needs an external physiology teacher with short notice. After starting at VIA University College as external teacher, I decided that I would like to become an internal teacher at the School of Nursing and kept an eye on job ads. I was so lucky, that my dream position became available soon after.

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

Before starting at VIA University College as external teacher, I did not have any contacts – but I knew someone who coincidentally heard about their needs for an external teacher and at the same time this person knew that I would like to work as a teacher. When applying for the internal position at VIA University College, I had my former leader recommending me for the position.

Describe a typical day/week:

Self-management plays a big role in my daily work-life. My main tasks are teaching and preparing teaching hours, however teaching itself only constitutes of a few hours per week. Besides conducting my own teaching, I follow the curriculum of other courses and coordinate with teachers from other courses. I am also involved in administrative tasks like timetable planning. Furthermore, I am employed for about 300 hours per year as scientist for research projects led by VIAs research centers. This includes conducting research as well as reading and writing scientific articles.

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

In my job, I of course benefit from teaching experiences during my PhD. However, the most beneficial skills I obtained during my PhD are

- I. The ability to learn and understand fast
- II. Be able to read and understand scientific articles
- III. Be able to write scientific articles/reviews and grant applications and
- IV. Self-management

The ability to learn and understand fast allows me to teach even topics I do not have a deep knowledge of when being tasked with it. I also do benefit a lot of my skill to understand what parts of the curriculum might be especially difficult for the students – this helps me to prepare a successful teaching hour. The ability to read and write scientific texts is helping me in my research related job tasks.

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

As I am teaching subjects that I am not an expert in before preparing the teaching, I do learn a lot about human physiology, anatomy and several other subjects. My ability to learn and understand fast as well as my background in biology, allow me to teach these subjects and I enjoy acquiring knowledge about the human body as part of my job.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

Nothing in regards to the job, I have now.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

Do not underestimate networking. Possibilities open up where you would not expect them – be ready to grasp those chances.

Lina Bukowski

**Education:**

2009: PhD in molecular Biology, Faculty of Science, Aarhus University
MSc in Molecular Biology

Jobs:

2019-present: Associate director, Qiagen, Aarhus
2018: Senior Bioinformatics Scientist, Qiagen, Aarhus
2016-2017: Associate Professor, MOMA, AUH
2015-2016: Researcher at MOMA, AUH
2010-2014: Post Doc at MOMA, Aarhus University Hospital (AUH)

Christa Haldrup, Associate director at Qiagen

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I considered staying as a post doc in the research Laboratory where I did my PhD, but didn't get the funding I applied for. At the end of my PhD, I applied for a post doc position at MOMA and got the job.

What kind of position do you have today?

I am associate director in QIAGEN in Aarhus.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

I stayed in academia for a number of years and felt that it was time for a change and new challenges. I was happy for my research job at MOMA, but wished that the results of my work would have a more direct impact. The fact that I would have to go abroad to become a group leader and the daily tasks I would have as a group leader were also a part of the decision to find a job outside of academia.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

At Qiagen, I started as a Senior Scientist. After the first year, my leader applied for a higher position at Qiagen and I was a good candidate to overtake his position.

How did you find your first job/current job?

During my post doc MOMA, I worked together with Bodil Øster, who was also a post doc at this time. When Bodil was employed at Qiagen, she told me about the work at Qiagen, her own tasks and other job profiles in the company. I got interested, wrote a unsolicited application and got a job offer.

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

Bodil Østers (as mentioned above). Furthermore, I collaborated with Qiagen during my research as a post doc.

Describe a typical day/week:

A typical week approximately consists to 50% of meeting with customers and internal team meetings within the different project groups. As an associate director, I am mainly advising and supervising the different project groups, but I also work on my own projects.

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

During my PhD and career as a researcher, I learned to manage several project at the same time. Furthermore, I learned to go in depths with different research topics but on the same hand to keep the overview. I learned to work independently and to take responsibility for my project. I also learned to have a critical approach to data and study results.

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

When I started to work for Qiagen, I had to learn some technical skills that I didn't acquire during my time as a researcher. An example could be software development and knowledge of different quality processes. Furthermore, I had to get used to contact with customers.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

To trust my own intuition and ideas and less in my supervisors. To enjoy the time as a PhD student even more and not to get stressed by the PhD deadline.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

I would recommend to use your network and dare to contact people with an interesting job profile.

Silja Hansen

**Education:**

2014: PhD in Chemistry, Aarhus University
2012: MSc in Medicinal Chemistry, Aarhus University

Jobs:

2019-present: Research Scientist, Arla Foods amba
2018- 2019: Consultant – research statistics, OUH
2015-17: Postdoc at Forensic Chemistry, AU

Christian Sibbersen, Research Scientist at Arla Foods amba, Aarhus

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I did not have a clear plan, so I did a postdoc in the same group as I did my PhD while applying for different positions. I knew that I was not going to stay in academia, so I applied for positions in the industry of pharma and food science. I did not have a lot of success with my applications, and since I could not be rehired by the university after 3 years, I started applying to jobs that were not strictly in research.

What kind of position do you have today?

I work as a research scientist in food chemistry at Arla Foods amba in Aarhus N. My work focuses on protein chemistry, proteomics, and analytical chemistry in general, but I also do a lot of statistical work and data analysis.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

I chose to work in the food sector because it provides interesting and fast-changing challenges with fewer limitations than the pharmaceutical industry. The road from idea to product is fast and the broad portfolio of products and processes provides a variety of tasks and problems to solve. There is also a large presence of food companies in Aarhus, which is a plus for people who would prefer to stay in Jutland, me included.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

Out of about 50 applications, I got to two second-round interviews at Novo Nordisk and Gubra, but did not get any offers. My contract at AU was ending, so I started applying for positions that were not strictly in research chemistry. I had some experience in statistics and R and applied for four positions within statistics and data analysis, which led to a job at OUH as a research statistician, consulting on various research projects at the hospital. I was there for 1.5 years, which yielded a great amount of experience with that type of work. This was an eye-opener to the fact that statistical/data science skills are in much higher demand than chemistry. The job posting for my current position at Arla required skills in both protein chemistry and statistics, which was a perfect match for me.

How did you find your first job/current job?

I found both jobs using a job search engine.

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

I had no contacts in either place beforehand.

Describe a typical day/week:

Days vary a lot, depending on the current tasks and projects. In a normal week I have many meetings with stakeholders, *e.g.* from dairies, product development, process people *etc.* whom we are supporting, to ensure that their problems are being solved correctly and to deliver results and recommendations. I also manage 3-4 collaborations with university researchers, and will typically have meetings with some of them as well. We have technicians who carry out most of the laboratory work, but I will work in the laboratory for new experiments and internal research projects, which is typically four to six hours per week. Furthermore, I spend a considerable amount of time analyzing data produced by our technicians and presenting it to stakeholders. Lastly, I assist with designing experiments for process and product development.

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

- A wide skillset in protein chemistry, which means that I can often solve difficult and uncommon problems where coworkers fail.
- The basics of scientific thought: planning experiments, interpreting evidence, and testing hypotheses – this plays a significant role in my daily work, where I must efficiently solve problems within food chemistry.
- Statistics and data analysis, programming in R.
- Presentation skills.

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

Basic “soft skills” applicable to business such as project management, stakeholder management, communication skills, strategic thinking, time management, prioritization *etc.* Arla Foods offer training in most of these, so it was not hard to “catch up” with colleagues who have been in the industry for longer. Domain knowledge in food/dairy science is another thing that I have had to learn on the job.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

Since I knew that I would not stay in academia, I should have started applying more and earlier than I did instead of sticking around doing postdoc work.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

It is good to have a clear goal in mind, but you have to be flexible - there might not be the same actual demand for your skills than you imagined. When I studied chemistry, we were told that there would be a big demand for our skills from the pharmaceutical industry in Denmark. In reality, however, there are 100+ applicants for research science jobs, and many PhDs end up in positions they could have gotten with just a MSc. Consider getting experience in a less common area that will help you stand out from the crowd and try to figure out what skills are in demand from the employer/industry side of things.

If you want to work in a specific location, consider what skills are in demand there (*e.g.* experience in medicinal chemistry will not get you far in Aarhus but it will in Copenhagen). The high number of applicants for interesting positions also makes it a numbers game, so plan on sending out lots of applications and not taking rejection personally.

Sarah Bisgaard Olesen

**Education:**

2008 – 2011: PhD, Department of Internal Medicine and Endocrinology, Aarhus University
2004 – 2007: MSc, Human Biology, University of Copenhagen
2000 – 2004: BSc, Sports and health Science, University of Southern Denmark

Jobs after PhD:

2015 – Present: Nutrition Scientist at Arla Foods amba
2014 – 2015: Post doc at the Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Basic Metabolic Research
2011 – 2014: Post Doc at Department of Internal Medicine and Endocrinology, Aarhus University, and Section of Sports Science, Aarhus University,

Britt Christensen, Nutrition Scientist, Arla Foods amba**How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?**

I was so fortunate to have a very proactive PhD supervisor so halfway during my PhD studies, we started applying for funding for a Post Doc. When I finished my PhD, I had received funding for a 3-year Post Doc.

What kind of position do you have today?

I work as a Nutritionist Scientist at Arla Foods amba and my department is part of Arla's innovation team in Skejby Aarhus. My department supports the business on a global level in all matters related to nutrition.

My work tasks are divided within three areas:

1. Clinical Trials: In collaboration with universities, I take part in designing studies and documenting evidence about the beneficial effects of consuming dairy products.
2. Product development: I assist the product development by assuring that new products are of high quality and I come with ideas about the nutritional composition of new products. The overall goal is to ensure that the products that Arla launches are as healthy as possible.
3. Working with marketing and sales: I work together with my colleagues from marketing and sales to ensure that Arla's health communication to the consumers is evidence-based. In addition, we are also responsible for the health and nutrition education of Arla employees.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

My educational background and my first jobs as Post Doc didn't exactly lead me in the direction towards the position, I hold today. A master's in Human Biology often leads to jobs in the pharmaceutical industry, but most jobs within this area are positioned in East Denmark. As I started to broaden my perspective of possible career options, I found out that the food industry could be a good alternative to the pharmaceutical industry - even though my theoretical background and knowledge within nutrition science was limited. In addition, I have had some collaboration during my post doc with Nutrition scientists from Arla and I found their job description very interesting. I really liked the idea that the clinical research that they were involved in was actually used afterwards in a commercial way.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

I had a couple of Post Doc positions before I was hired by Arla Foods amba. When I applied for the job, which I still hold today, Arla was looking for a candidate with good experience in managing clinical trials, and I think my experience from managing clinical trials during my masters, PhD and Post Docs helped me get the job.

How did you find your first job/current job?

During my PhD, I applied for funding and ended up receiving funding from both the Danish independent research council and the world anti-doping agency, ensuring a three year post doc. As my Post Doc position was coming to the end, I experienced that the possibilities to stay in academia were limited. I therefore created an account on JobIndex and applied for a couple of jobs whilst also applying for funding to stay in academia. After the first Post Doc position, I was offered a new Post Doc position but during this I kept applying for jobs outside academia. One year later, I got my current job in Arla, which I was notified about through Arla's webpage where I had signed up for getting informed when new job positions were posted.

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

I had a couple of contacts in Arla Foods Ingredients that I sought some advice from before applying for my current job in Arla Foods a.m.b.a.

Describe a typical day/week:

There is really no such thing as a typical workday for me. I rarely work on a specific project for a longer period; instead, I have several projects running at once. A workweek consists of a mix of internal and external meetings, and catching up on the specific projects.

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

To name the most important ones, as I experience it, I would say project management and the ability to multitask. In my position, I have a lot on my plate and juggle different projects on a daily basis. That is something I love about the job; there is so much variety and it doesn't get boring. But you have to be able to multitask. In addition, I studied for a year in the US during my PhD and my experiences with working together and communicating well with people from other cultures and ethical backgrounds have been beneficial to me. It relates well to the work environment I am a part of today, where most communication is in English, there quite a lot of international employees, and we have international collaborations.

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

Specific theoretical knowledge about nutrition. It also concerned me a bit when applying for the job as a Nutrition Scientist, but I was confident that I had the skills to acquire new knowledge quickly and that was something I highlighted during my interview.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

Not that much actually, I think that I was so fortunate to have PhD supervisors that were great at being proactive and early in my PhD helped me plan and apply for Post doc funding.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

Be open-minded and see possibilities. As a PhD, you have gained many competencies that are more general and can be used in a variety of different job positions. Use your network and your networks network in order to find new job possibilities. Don't hold back to apply for a job even though you currently don't have all the competencies that are described in the job ad. Then my final advice is: Embrace the opportunities you get.

Line Thams

**Education:**

2005-2008: PhD in Physiology and Biophysics, AU
2004: MSc in Molecular biology, AU

Jobs:

2018- present: Founder and CEO, Stipe Therapeutics Aps
2017-present: Senior Researcher and PI, Dept. of Biomedicine, AU
2016-present: Founder and CEO, Initiator Pharma
2015-19: Founder and CBO, NMD Pharma
2014-present: Research Business Manager, Dept. of Biomedicine, AU
2014-17: Senior Adviser on membrane proteins, Pumpkin, Dept. of MBG, AU
2013-14: Senior Researcher, Pumpkin, Dept. of MBG, AU
2011-12: Danish National Sailing Team, participated in the Olympics 2012
2009-11: Postdoc, Dept. of Physiology and Biophysics, AU
2009-17: Co-founder Pcovery Aps, Chairman Board of Directors from 2009-10
2008-09: Postdoc, Dept. of Molecular Biology, AU

Claus Elsborg Olesen, Founder and CEO Stipe Therapeutics, Aps, Aarhus

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

During his PhD, Claus did not do any specific career planning for the next step after his PhD. However, he really like the academic research and therefore decided to do a postdoc.

What kind of position do you have today?

Today Claus is work as CEO in the two start-up companies Initiator Pharma and STipe Therapeutics. In addition, he is also employed as Senior Researcher at Aarhus University and he works as a Research Business Manager at Dept. of Biomedicine, Aarhus University, where his job is to support and promote spin-out companies based on scientific discoveries.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

During his PhD, Claus discovered that he liked the academic field and doing structural biology research. Combined with a big research grant he received after he finished his PhD, he decided to pursue a career in academia. In 2009, during his first postdoc, Claus and his colleagues started the biotech company Pcovery, based on their research. This start-up process was something Claus liked, and he found it very appealing. He was also inspired by doing something that in the end would benefit patients and found this to be more obtainable in the start-up company compared to in academia. Meanwhile, Claus also participated in an innovation course and found it to be very inspiring. Together, this triggered Claus to pursue a career in biotech start-up companies.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

During the start-up of Pcovery and NMD Pharma, Claus gained huge knowledge and a big network, which have been beneficial in the start-up process of the two companies (Stipe Therapeutics and Initiator Pharma) he is currently working in.

How did you find your first job/current job?

As a Research Business Manager at Dept. of Biomedicine, Aarhus University, Claus is meeting with local researchers to support and facilitate the transition of scientific discoveries into start-up companies. It was through this position that Claus got engaged in both Initiator Pharma and STipe Therapeutics.

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

Claus got in contact with the other co-founders through his job as Research Business Manager and together with them founded the companies.

Describe a typical day/week:

Claus works many hours during a week but says that he enjoys it and consider it to be, not only a job, but also a hobby. Due to his different jobs, he has many different tasks each week. As Research Business Manager, each week he usually looks at new potential projects that needs support and follow-up on updates from ongoing projects also. In the two companies, Initiator Pharma and STipe Therapeutics, Claus normally spends a lot of time on traveling to meet and talk to new investors. He also talks to stakeholders in the two companies and provide them with weekly updates on the progression. Furthermore, Claus also talks to the employees to make sure they follow the plans, and everything progresses according to planned. Claus is also involved in the long-term planning of new task, experiments, and milestones, including recruitment of new employees need to develop the companies and achieve the milestones. Finally, as CEO, Claus is also responsible for the general operation of the companies and controlling the budgets.

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

During his PhD Claus gained strong analytical skills and abilities to quickly identify key messages. This is extremely valuable for him today when they in the companies need to interpret and conclude on experiments and from this decide on and plan new experiments that will bring the drug development forward. Additionally, Claus mentions time management as an important skill he uses today, when prioritizing which tasks to focus on.

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

The research on Claus' PhD focused a lot on details but lacked interdisciplinary work. The ability to translate the small details into a broad perspective and work interdisciplinary is something Claus has developed after his PhD, for example to understand in detail how a specific compound works on a cellular level and then translate this to how this compound works in a person and can be utilized as a drug.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

One thing Claus would have done differently during his PhD was to have focused more on translation research and test his research in other fields.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

Follow your dream and what you like to do. If going to the industry, find a pharma company of a descent size that allows you to develop different skills and let you try to work in different departments to gain an all-round experience.

Jesper Geert Pedersen



Education:
PhD in medical physics
MSc in Physics

Jobs:
2018: Owner and technical director,
Gradient Software
2015-18: Researcher, Medical Physics, AUH
2014: Research assistant, MRI center, AUH

David Christoffer Hansen, owner and technical director at Gradient Software

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I started planning about halfway through my PhD.

What kind of position do you have today?

I am the owner and technical director of Gradient Software, where we develop research software for MRI machines.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

I was longing for something with a more direct clinical impact, which seemed almost impossible in my old field.

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 researcher at the department of Medical Physics at Aarhus University Hospital. During this time, I had a number of side projects with researchers at a couple of foreign institutions. It was one of these which eventually led to my current job.

How did you find your first job/current job?

One of the groups I was working with had been looking for developers to aid their MRI researchers, but had been unsuccessful in finding people with a mix of programming and image processing know-how. They instead wanted to hire external contractors, and suggested I apply when the call was made. I started a company, made a bid for the call and won the bid.

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

I had been collaborating with the research group in question since the beginning of my PhD.

Describe a typical day/week:

We are typically working on one or two projects at a time. Most of my time is spent on implementing algorithms and workflows in to be used in clinical MRI research. We also build tools for researchers, such as data-viewers, and I spend around 20% of my time supporting the research community using our open source software.

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

The ability to read, understand and implement a research paper is something I use a lot. Generally I am using most of the courses I took during my PhD (including bio-statistics!).

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

My PhD obviously didn't teach me how to do accounting and taxes for a company. But another skill is

simply one of being structured in your day to day work – something I certainly could have used during my PhD.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

I am pretty satisfied with my PhD overall.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

If you decide to go the post-doc route, make sure that you enter a good research group, with PhDs/postdocs doing similar things. This is probably more important than your research topic and the institution. And being a one-man research group is just no fun.

Erik Buch Jørgensen



Education:
2013: PhD in Genetics and
Biotechnology
2003: MSc in Genetics

Jobs:
Research scientist - Bioinformatic
2016- present: Eurofins Genomics
Genotyping Denmark
2013-16: : GenoScan A/S

Jamal Momeni, Research Scientist at Bioinformatics

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I was considering possibilities the last six months of my PhD.

What kind of position do you have today?

As I am working in R&D department of Eurofins Genomics (EFG), my position consist of two parts, which are research activities as well as bioinformatics analysis of the data.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

My initiative to start as a bioinformatician in a company was to get involved in that sort of activities which makes me able to transfer the knowledge to application. Here, I got the chance to deal with real data used in the industry or health care services.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

I was directly joined GenoScan right after my PhD. The company was a knowledge enterprise, owned by my supervisor; therefore, he offered me the job in the company.

How did you find your first job/current job?

My current job came in the continuation of my previous job when EFG acquired GenoScan

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

I was offered a job by my supervisor and owner of the company.

Describe a typical day/week:

My day starts more or less the same as researchers. I do have some duties regarding project planning, data analysis, guiding the lab technicians, and meetings. The only difference is that I need to deal with customers in case they need some consultations.

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

I almost use all my experiences from my PhD time, but if I want to be specific, I am using mostly my bioinformatics knowledge due to analysis of the data.

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

In my field of research, there are different type of methodologies and approaches, which are utilized in order to generate genomic data. I was using some of them, however during my working years I started to learn several new methods, which made my perspective much broader.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

I have enjoyed my PhD time, but if I had the opportunity maybe I was using my time to learn some more programming languages and skills.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

As a PhD student, it is always a good idea to improve your skills by practicing in different ways such as studying books and literatures, workshop, and courses in your field of research. Obtaining a good network of researcher from academia and industry could benefit you a lot. Getting a wide insight on your future carrier and considering all opportunities in industry or any other sector than academia could help you clear your carrier path.

Mastaneh Afshar

**Education:**

2007 - 2010: PhD in science as a collaboration between the Danish Centre for Food And Agriculture and iNANO
MSc in Molecular Biology

Jobs:

2018 - present: Senior R&D Manager, Food Microbiology, Arla Foods R&D
2016 - 2018: Senior R&D Manager, Food Physic and Functionality, Arla Foods R&D
2013 - 2016: Research scientist in pre- and probiotics, Arla Strategic Innovation Centre
2010 - 2013: Postdoc at Department of Ophthalmology, Aarhus University Hospital investigating diabetic retinopathy

Simon Metz Pedersen, Senior R&D Manager, Food Microbiology, Arla Foods R&D

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I didn't do any career planning as such during my PhD. With that said, I of course new that the project I was doing was providing me with contacts within a field that would be hiring people with my background. I also knew that expanding and building a network in my situation would be useful.

What kind of position do you have today?

Today, I work as a manager leading an R&D group at Arla that works with food microbiology.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

The way of employment in a research group in academia did not suit me for several reasons. In academia, you are usually employed for shorter periods and during employment, you have to search and apply for funding every time you want your employment extended. This prevents you from focusing solely on the job as a researcher. Another obvious reason to seek away from academia is the number of available positions as associate/assistant professor. There are many PhD students and postdocs, but not many positions for employment thereafter, unless you are willing to take 2-3 years abroad and make the necessary sacrifices to be considered for the few available positions. The workload in academia is also much bigger. I work less now than I did as a postdoc, and I have a lot more influence on decision-making. Of course, I also have more responsibility. In my opinion, a disadvantage in academia is all the small groups. There is not much cooperation and coordination between the groups at the university compared to big companies like Arla. At Arla, the biggest and most important asset is people. In academia, the most important asset is knowledge, but since nothing is being done to retain the people, the knowledge disappears with them.

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 postdoc for a couple of years at the Department of Ophthalmology at Aarhus University Hospital. After that, I got a job at Arla related to the topic of my PhD project. So, my PhD project opened the door for me at Arla. After my first position as a Research Scientist, I got a position as a manager for a team working with food physics. This position had a completely different focus enabling me to work with people management. After a couple of years working with food physics, I moved back to my old group at Arla (R&D) and got the management position I have today.

How did you find your first job?

My first job as a postdoc was a job I got because one of my friends worked at the Department of Ophthalmology and knew that they had an open position that would suit me. This is a good example of how my career was guided by opportunities rather than a pre-determined career plan.

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

During my PhD, I had established a good network, and that provided me with 3 contacts at Arla at the time of my first employment there.

Describe a typical working day/week:

Many of the things we make require the involvement of a lot of people. To make that work, we have many meetings where we decide what to do and how to coordinate everything. Furthermore, as a leader, I have individual monthly meetings with employees where we talk about their work progress as well as their well-being. On top of that, I have both weekly and monthly meetings with my team, and I have meetings with my other manager colleagues. My work day also depends on what projects I'm involved in. Sometimes, I'm involved in projects where I need to collect and present knowledge to my colleagues. My job is to a high degree people management, and often I have conversations with colleagues regarding the best ways of moving forward or simply expressing my opinion on how to approach specific challenges.

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

The broad scientific knowledge. I am now employed as a generalist using a broad scientific knowledge, which is a skill that academia has provided for me. From a PhD degree, you learn a mindset about how to work with data and research so that you critically can interpret them and discuss them. I still use some topic-specific knowledge about bacteria that I acquired during my PhD. From a broader perspective, I learnt to work independently as well as to collaborate with other people: colleagues, supervisor etc. I also learnt a lot about presenting and communicating from doing scientific presentations and writing my thesis. Overall, I use a little bit of the topic-specific knowledge and a great deal of the conceptual knowledge I gained.

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

I have learnt how the world works outside the university and that the main goal is not to know everything about everything. There is a pragmatic world that I did not know about while I was at the university. At Arla, I was suddenly put in the position as an expert, while at the university I was surrounded by people who all had some expertise within the field. In that situation, I had a feeling of everybody knowing more than me. I also didn't know anything about working in a company. In my experience, it usually takes a year for a person coming from academia to get used to work life in a company. Processes and ways of collaborating are not the same. At the university, you are very independent from your colleagues, but in a company, you are completely dependent on them. I had to collaborate with them at all times about everything. I was not prepared for this.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

I have a position that I'm very happy with, so looking at it that way everything worked out in my favor. With that said, I can see that I should have been more critical about choosing to work with things that did not interest me. The biochemical part of my project was very interesting, but I worked with NMR, and that never caught my interest, so when I was done with my PhD, I never returned to that again.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

Be flexible and open for possibilities. The road to the dream job can be long and the path is curvy. The dream job might also not be what it promised to be. There are many interesting options that you probably never considered as relevant for you. Also, use your network and your contacts. Most jobs are a result of good contacts.

Stine Høvring Godsk



Education:
PhD in Agroecology , Aarhus University
MSc in Climate Science and Policy

Jobs:
2020-Present: Consultant at DTI, Denmark
2012-2017: Research Specialist at EDF, India
2011-2012: Consultant at TERI, New Delhi

Drishya Nair, Agro-Environmental Consultant at Danish Technological Institute

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

5-6 months prior to submission of thesis.

What kind of position do you have today?

Consultant to an agro-technology company.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

This was a good opportunity for me to improve my understanding about industry and to utilize and implement the skills that were acquired during and before my PhD.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

I have worked in a multi-partner project before starting my PhD at Aarhus University.

How did you find your first job/current job?

I was approached by the company/organization for a potential position in their team.

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

Connection with few people in the company was initiated during stakeholder meetings held as part of my PhD program.

Describe a typical day/week:

I provide inputs on new project proposals and help in capacity building in relation to existing projects.

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

- Hands-on experience in operating analytical instruments
- Experience in conducting field and laboratory experiments
- Stakeholder management
- Communication skills

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

- Project coordination
- Project proposal writing
- Capacity building
- Networking

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

I should have invested more time in improving my project management skills, as well as participated in grant writing groups.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

- Identify potential companies/organizations that work in your field
- Initiate contacts well in advance
- Participate in conferences and present your work whenever possible to get a better outreach

Sarannya E

PhDs working in the public sector



Education:
PhD in Medicine (Clinical Social Medicine and Rehabilitation)
Process Consultant
MSc in Nursing (Cand. Cur.)
BSc in Nursing (Suppleringsuddannelsen i Sygepleje)
Nursing Education

Jobs:
2016-present: Health Consultant, Aarhus Municipality
2013-2016: PhD student, CFK/DEFACTUM
2010-2013: Health Consultant, CFK/DEFACTUM
2006-2010: Developmental nurse, Head of quality and patient safety, Orthopaedic Department, Randers Regional Hospital
2005-2006: Clinical Supervisor, Endoscopic Unit, AUH

Monica Milter Ehlers, Health Consultant, Aarhus Municipality

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

During my PhD, I found out, that I didn't want to be a full time researcher, but rather use the skills that I had obtained during the PhD study combined with my experience from and interest in the Danish healthcare system. Therefore, I looked for jobs where I could challenge, change, and develop the healthcare system for the benefit of the people who used it.

What kind of position do you have today?

I am a health consultant at "Health Strategy and Development", The Magistrate of Health and Care in the Municipality of Aarhus.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

My skills, experiences and time were better spend not being a full time researcher. Full time research takes a lot of time and with three younger children, a husband working late hours, a house, sports, etc. it is not my priority right now. Maybe my interest has always been focused on more rapid challenges and changes within the Danish healthcare system (i.e. acute situations), and maybe that is why I tend to get restless if I sit in front a computer for a long time.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job? How did they lead to your current job?

Jobs prior to my current job has centered on development of e.g. workflows, health quality, patient care, students, and health professionals. It motivates me, why it was natural for me to look for a job after my PhD degree where I could work with development of healthcare. Additionally, due to reorganization, I could not return to my previous job as a health consultant after finishing my PhD. I therefore applied for an interesting job as a project manager of a cross-sectoral project on follow-up home visits at the Municipality of Aarhus.

How did you find your current job?

I looked at different job ads. During my time as a project manager of a cross-sectoral project on follow-up home visits at the Municipality of Aarhus, my boss asked me to apply for a permanent position as health consultant working with rehabilitation, which happened to be within my research field.

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

Even though I had been working in the Municipality of Aarhus during my graduate study, I did not know anyone at the unit where I was looking for a job. I just jumped into it.

What are your work assignments during a typical week?

Due to COVID-19, I have worked on other tasks than usual. Currently, my main task is to implement COVID testing for 4,600 health professionals working in the Municipality of Aarhus, which includes collaboration with SSI (Statens Serum Institut), Central Denmark Region, managers and health professionals, in addition to planning and coordination of testing and pick-up strategies. Besides that, I am a part of the steering committee for the Advanced Practiced Nursing (APN)-education, which includes secretary work such as doing analyses, appendixes, and summaries. Furthermore, I facilitate and take part of the network meetings for APN-students and I work as a co-censor at the APN-education. I perform professional support of the head of Health and Care in the municipality, the advisory board for education for nurses (APN and close-to-home nursing), and other departments and colleagues. Furthermore, I underpin the collaboration between the municipality of Aarhus and private functioning physiotherapists. I am an external lecturer in "Project management" at Department of Public Health, Aarhus University. In my spare time, I am currently writing a book chapter in a book about close-to-home nursing, and I am a mentor.

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

I benefit from many of the generic skills e.g. project management, communication, ability to work systematically, networking, ability to gain new knowledge, being critically and reflective, and my knowledge on quantitative and qualitative methods. Additionally, I use my knowledge from the primary and secondary sector, and my knowledge about political organizations.

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

During my PhD, I would have liked to learn how to write scientific papers – not just to learn it theoretically, but also practically. I had to sit on my own, without much guidance from my supervisors, which did not help me develop my writing skills. Today, I would like to become a better writer, why I say yes to write e.g. a book chapter and articles, if the opportunity comes up.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

As I found it hard to write scientific articles, I would have liked a mentor or supervisor, who could have helped me. Participation in some kind of writing fellowship would have been great.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

Consider what motivates you and what you find interesting to work with. What kind of job fits into your private life and your interests? Your first job may not be your dream job, but my experience is, that you can learn a lot about yourself, your field and other people, anyway – and this knowledge, you can use in the search for your "dream job".

Karin Rosenkilde Laursen



Education:
2017: PhD, Faculty of Health Institute of
Public Health, Department of nursing. Aarhus
University
2012: MSc in Nursing

Jobs:
Present: Head of Nursing research,
Department of Neurology at Zealand
University Hospital

2017-2020: 50% clinical nurse specialist at
department of Neurology at Zealand
University Hospital and 50 % Associate
professor, Department of Public Health –
section of nursing at Aarhus University.

Malene Beck, head of nursing research at the department of Neurology at Zealand University Hospital.

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

A Ph.D. degree was not my plan at all. My intention was to become a teacher after obtaining my master's degree. As it turned out my master thesis had caught the eye of the management at Roskilde Sygehus who planned to hire a Ph.D.-student. After several meetings, a Ph.D. project with me as the Ph.D.-student as planned. I did not plan for this to happen but the timing and topic was right. During my time as a Ph.D. student, I learned that creation of a career, as a nurse with a Ph.D.-degree is hard work. You really need to think strategically and pragmatically on how a career path in academia and nursing can look like. It is a question of designing solid research project. Especially, in the sense of designing projects that are doable in a clinical setting. A year before I handed in my dissertation, I started planning for the time after my Ph.D. The positions I have had after my Ph.D. are positions, which I have co-created with leaders within the system.

What kind of position do you have today?

I am head of nursing research at the department of Neurology at Zealand University Hospital.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

Through my career, I have been interested in nursing theory but after having spent years of becoming an expert in nursing theory, I sensed an urge to focus 100 % on a clinical setting. I needed to see how theory works; how can we understand and explain the clinical setting with the use of theories. You might say that I needed to test how the theories works. For me the clinical setting offers what you could call a 'reality check' that enables me to set my theoretical knowledge in to play. I chose my current direction of pragmatic reasons. After having been employed part time at two different companies simultaneously, you realize that 50 % in one workplace plus 50 % in another workplace does not equal 100 % workload – it equals 150 % workload. I needed to focus on one area and not being both at the university and at the hospital. Addition, the basic fact that there was an open position obviously was important. As a nurse with a Ph.D. degree there are not a whole lot of jobs so when something comes up, you need to consider it seriously.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

Yes, I shifted from pediatrics to neurology due to the topic I am engaged in. I am able to transfer themes from the topic I worked in from one setting to another and I think that opened possibilities for me.

How did you find your first job/current job?

My first job was partly at the department where I did my Ph.D. and partly at the faculty I was enrolled in during my Ph.D. period. I found my first job after my Ph.D. through the people I collaborated with during my Ph.D. the same actually goes for my current job.

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

Since my time as a Ph.D. Student, I maintained contact with my supervisors and with the medical professor at my department.

Describe a typical day/week:

In my current job, a typical week does not exist - No weeks are alike. I have worked systematically with blocking days in my calendar for writing, as one of my obligations in my current position is to publish. Today is one of my writing days. Nevertheless, I haven't started writing yet, because my phone keeps on ringing. But what is typical for my days is that they are full of tasks ranging from for instance; talking to one of the staff nurses about a certain interests area of hers which I can help her to qualify through literature search. To engaging in a management meeting and then further on to supervise a Ph.D. student and then to a meeting in a national board of advisory and so on and so forth.

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

I now know how big a part motivation plays. Motivation is the one thing that keeps me running, when I work weekend nights and write articles in my head while I am cooking.

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

After my Ph.D. I needed to learn how to argue for what can be categorized as clinical work. I have engaged in lots of discussion on this topic in relation to my current position but also in my former positions. For me clinical work can involve various tasks, it could be the instrumental bedside procedure but it can also be qualification of the nursing and caring culture at a department in terms of running journal clubs reflection sessions and so on. I have learned to argue that clinical work is not solely direct hands on patients, it is also the work that enhance the staff's competence in the clinical setting.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

I was surprised by how quickly after I had finished my Ph.D. I was supposed to be the driver of processes, so I would advise people to engage in the various research environments that exists.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

You need to be able to work on different levels ranging from being close to hands on and working more strategically. You need to be able to work at different levels of abstraction. My main advice is nourish your network, find people to cooperate with and engage in cooperative projects.

Louise Abildgaard Møller



Education:
2007: PhD in Health, SDU
2000: MSc in Sports Science, SDU

Jobs:
2017- present: Researcher, DEFACTUM, Central Denmark Region
2011-17: External lecturer, Health, AU
2007-2017: Consultant, Aarhus Municipality

Jes Bak Sørensen, Researcher, DEFACTUM, Central Denmark Region

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I started to look for my next job about six months before I finished my PhD. During this time, I went to one interview before I landed the job as a health consultant at Aarhus Municipality.

What kind of position do you have today?

I am a researcher at DEFACTUM, which is a research center and consultancy within the Central Denmark Region.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

When I was a master's student, I knew I wanted to have a job as a researcher. My first proposal for a PhD included a lot of lab work, but I could not find funding for this project. An opportunity for a PhD arose in another group and the project was an evaluation of a public health measure, thus I ended up doing much more applied research. Because I wanted to be a researcher, the transferable skills I gained during the PhD was more important to me than the specific topic. Additionally, I liked that my research could easily be applied in the real world and I wanted future jobs to have a similar impact.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

I worked 10 years as a health consultant at Aarhus Municipality, where I developed, implemented, monitored and documented health policy. During the same period, I was also an external lecturer at Aarhus University.

How did you find your first job/current job?

During my time at Aarhus Municipality, I was part of an advisory group together with a researcher from DEFACTUM. At one point, the research group at DEFACTUM was expanding and I saw this as an opportunity to back into research and produce epidemiological research to be readily applied out in the municipalities.

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

I knew a lot of people at DEFACTUM before I started working there because I spent some time working there "on loan" from the municipality. In addition, I had collaborated with several of my current colleagues on projects while I worked at the municipality and I was part of the advisory group for the "How are you"-survey which DEFACTUM conducts. I had been also in touch with one of my current colleagues during my time at the municipality because we shared an interest in monitoring the level of psychical activity in the population.

Describe a typical day/week:

The main focus of my job is a population-based survey which takes place every four years, so the tasks depend on where in the process I am. Overall, I'm involved in all elements of the survey, ie. design, implementation and evaluation. This consists of deciding which questions to include in the survey based on discussions with local and national stakeholders (i.e. which topics/issues do we believe will affect the health and wellbeing of the people in the coming years), data analysis, and presentation of results to local stakeholders (e.g. employees from and residents in the municipalities). In addition, I do "traditional" epidemiological research based on the survey data and linked register data. Most of our research projects are funded by external grants, so I also spend time writing grant proposals.

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

During my PhD, I spent a lot of time talking to local stakeholders to understand their specific local context, and how the implementation of the intervention were going. So, I developed an understanding of the interplay between the local context and the knowledge I as a researcher can produce, a skill very important to the work I do today. In addition, summarizing research papers and communicating the results to non-specialist is important in my current position.

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

Knowledge of how the health sector in the municipalities works. This includes the political and administrative processes and how knowledge is received and implemented in local contexts.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

Not much. The media picked up some of my research, so I would have liked to know more about how to handle media inquiries.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

Keep in touch with former university friends, colleagues etc. so that your network is up-to-date. Additionally, be open to positions/tasks that might not be directly related to your thesis topic, but find a way to bring the skills you are an expert in into the project and influence the process that way. Highlight your transferable research skills in your cover letter.

Nanna Weye



Education:
2020: Specialist in ophthalmology
2016: PhD, Aarhus University (AU) - at Dept. of Ophthalmology, Aarhus University Hospital (AUH)
2010: Cand.med. (MD), AU

Jobs:
2020- present: Principal investigator Horizon2020 project, AUH
2018-2020: Research assistant, AUH
2016-2020: Ophthalmology specialist training
2013: PhD student, AU (at Dept. of Ophthalmology, AUH)
2012: Clinical introduction position in ophthalmology, AUH
2011: Doctor in the Danish Armed Forces
2010: Clinical Basic Education (KBU), Herlev Hosp, Allerød MedClin

Peter Skov Jensen, Principal investigator at Horizon2020 EU-project See Far

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I already knew when I started my PhD that my next step after the PhD was specialist training in Ophthalmology.

What kind of position do you have today?

After handing in my PhD in 2016, I completed my specialist training in Ophthalmology in 2020 including stays at Department of Ophthalmology at Aarhus University Hospital (AUH), a private ophthalmologist and Department of Ophthalmology at Aalborg University Hospital. Beside my specialist training, I was employed as a research assistant at Department of Ophthalmology at AUH involved in the See Far project, which started in 2018. The See Far project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. After I finished my specialist training, I started a full time position at the Department of Ophthalmology at AUH working as the Principal investigator in Denmark on the See Far project.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

I had a desire to do more research, but also use the clinical ophthalmological skills I have learned. Along with that, I have always had a personal interest in new technology. I found the current project to be a great opportunity to combine all of the above.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

The See Far project has been running since 2018, where I started as a clinical assistant alongside my specialist training. Therefore, it was natural for me to join the project full time.

How did you find your current job?

It was actually by a coincidence. At the time – a few years ago - I was doing my specialist training in ophthalmology. During a family party, I met a person who works on putting consortiums together for applications for Horizon2020 EU-projects, and he introduced me to the See Far project.

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

I did not have any contacts at the specific See Far project before I started, but I knew one of the persons working on putting the See Far consortium together. The project has a collaboration with both Aarhus University and the Department of Ophthalmology at Aarhus University Hospital, where I have many contacts from prior work and research.

Describe a typical day/week:

There is no typical day for me, because it is very varied. This also means I am usually flexible to plan my day, taking into account pending and upcoming tasks. I usually start the day by checking for new correspondence from other consortium partners or other stakeholders. Throughout the project we have different tasks and deliverables of technical, clinical, ethical and legal matter, which needs to be taken care of by the consortium, either with me as lead or contributing partner. This often means gathering information and further corresponding with advisors within AUH/AU as well as relevant Danish authorities.

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

Most of the specific knowledge and technical skills from the laboratory that I acquired doing my PhD, I do not take into use in my current position. However, the background information gained by reading clinical articles during my PhD is in the back of my mind. The skills I benefit the most from my PhD is project and time management. Also, the easiness of communicating in both written and oral English, which was strengthened during my PhD study is something, I benefit greatly from every day. Last but not least, I benefit greatly from the general experience of having done research - that is, knowing "the road will often be fun, but at times bumpy and full of surprises, perhaps taking detours", and knowing how to adapt to this in order to reach goal. This experience brings confidence and somewhat ease-of-mind in order to perform and succeed.

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

As my PhD study concerned laboratory research, I have afterwards had to gain additional knowledge about clinical studies, specifically related to regulations and legislation. Although I did take a GCP (Good Clinical Practice) course during my PhD, I would have benefited from knowing more about practical aspects and requirements in national and international regulations for these types of clinical studies beforehand.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

Not necessarily anything different. I would probably have done more exploratory spin-off studies and collaborations beside the specific aim of my PhD. However, in general I am very satisfied with the outcome of my PhD and the competences and skills I have acquired during that time.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

I recommend that you expand and nourish your network, and use it. Be open-minded and curious on new things. Do not be afraid to say yes to new possibilities that might at first seem overwhelming. Follow your dreams, trust your intuition and seek what you find interesting to do. You have many years ahead of you - find a job that makes you happy going to work, being at work and going home from work.

Signe Krejberg Jeppesen



Education:
PhD in Immunology and Virology
MSc in Biomedicine

Jobs:
2016 – Present: Postdoc and currently lab
manager, Aarhus University

Marie Beck Iversen, postdoc and lab manager

Initially, Marie was offered a position in the lab where she did her PhD, for 8 months to finalise her project. During these months, she applied for a Postdoc position in other labs. Therefore she did not plan much during her PhD for the next career step.

She is currently working as Lab manager – Assistant professor/AC-TAP at Aarhus University (AU). She has never dreamt of becoming a PI (principal Investigator) but wanted to stay in academia. The current position was an opportunity for her to stay in academia and get a permanent position at AU.

Prior to the current position, she got 2 postdoc positions and 1 assistant professor position. She thinks networking and keeping contact with colleagues throughout the years helped her to obtain her current position, in addition to having a CV that matches the requirements.

Her first job was in the lab where she did her PhD. Her second position was put her way via her former boss. Since her PhD and other positions were in the same department, recommendations by others and networking definitively were decisive factors.

Marie's typical week at work as lab manager could be as follow:

- Running experimental projects which includes experiments (in vitro/in vivo)
- Managing different things in the lab, such as problem-solving, managing the lab technician and managing orders, supervising students, arranging lab meeting and scientific meetings, meetings with PI, collaborators and lab members
- Setting up new methods and techniques and training of new people in the lab.

Marie believes she has gotten the most benefit of everything related to the experiments, such as In vivo studies, and how to seek information during her PhD.

She gained more experience after her PhD in terms of taking things into a broader sense. Overall, she is very pleased with the outcome of her PhD and the experience she achieved.

Her advice to the recent year PhD students is ; "If they want to become a PI at AU they have to decide early and work for it! Choose labs where you can learn techniques and for that you need to spend some time abroad. Be open-minded for future opportunities. And do not panic if a door closes -Use your network, use social networks and knock on doors – PIs are only human as well ."

Ensieh Farahani



Education:
2016: PhD in Molecular Medicine
MSc in: Molecular Medicine,

Jobs
2018-present: Clinical molecular biologist
and manager of the molecular pathology
laboratory, dept. pathology, Aarhus
University Hospital
2016-2018: postdoc, AU

Iben Dugaard, Clinical Molecular Biologist, manager of the Molecular Pathology Laboratory, dept. of Pathology, Aarhus University Hospital

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

I always imagined myself having a career in academia, but since this would require me to spend another two years abroad as a postdoc besides the two years I had already spent in USA as a PhD student, I was forced to reconsider about a year into my first postdoc position. I started looking for alternatives and found a job add from the dept. of pathology, which caught my attention. I decided to apply for the position – mostly as a test for myself to see how it felt, as I did not expect to actually get the job – I did however, and all of a sudden, I found myself transitioning out of academia.

What kind of position do you have today?

I am still in the same position. I am working as a clinical molecular biologist at the dept. of pathology, where I manage all analysis etc. in the molecular pathology laboratory.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

As stated above, the main reason was that my Plan A (Academia) would require me to spend more time abroad, and I did not see this as being compatible with my family life. I therefore looked for the best alternative, and fortunately, I have not regretted my decision at all.

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 position outside of academia.

How did you find your first job/current job?

I found it on Aarhus University Hospital's list of job openings.

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

One of my co-supervisors during my PhD was a pathologist at the dept. of pathology and I had therefore spent some time there during my PhD.

Describe a typical day/week:

Overall, my main task is to ensure that all molecular analyses performed at the department of pathology live up to our quality standards and that they are performed within the politically defined deadlines for cancer diagnostics. My weeks generally involve a lot of meetings, troubleshooting and data analysis.

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

As a PhD student, you are forced to develop your skills in scientific and critical thinking and I believe this is a major benefit in every job including mine.

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

Learning how to navigate in a complex organization, as well as better communication and leadership skills.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

I would like to have been more open minded, and explored possible alternatives to a career in academia at an earlier point in time.

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 and try to explore different alternatives as early in your career as possible. However, when you discover what you truly want for your career, make an extra effort to get your resumé as relevant as possible for the job of your dreams. There are many highly qualified applicants out there and you need to outshine them. Also, if you do not want a long-term career in academia, get out before it is too late. 10+ years of postdoctoral experience is not necessarily a benefit, as you may seem difficult to "reshape" for a new employer.

Nadia Øgaard



Education:
1998:MSc – Chemistry and Biotechnology, AU
2002: PhD - Molecular Biology, AU

Jobs:
2019- present: Head of Clinical NGS Core Facility at
Department of Molecular Medicine
2005-2019: Department of Clinical Immunology
2002-2005: Post Doc at Aarhus University

Mette Christiansen, Head of Clinical NGS Core Facility at Dept. of Molecular Medicine, Aarhus

Which choices did you take during your PhD to strengthen your career options?

During my PhD, I realized that my project was too narrow and specialized, so I pushed my project in a different direction and changed supervisor. Thereby, I could accomplish more, leaving me with a broader network, more scientific skills and more possibilities after finishing the PhD.

What kind of position do you have today and what are your main tasks?

I currently work as Head of the Clinical NGS core facility at Department of Molecular Medicine (MOMA). In my current job, I have the responsibility of managing 13 academics (11 PhDs and 2 MScs) in the diagnostic unit. Besides diverse management tasks, networking and strategic planning, I work with competence management, help deciding what equipment to acquire for the department and which assays to implement in clinical use, applying for funds etc.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

I applied for my current job because after 14 years in an extremely interesting field (immunology and genetics), I felt like I was at a place in my career, where I wanted to try something new and more challenging. In addition, I enjoy being a part of setting directions, planning future strategies and working with people.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

I worked for 14 years at Department of Clinical Immunology where I was responsible for a variety of different molecular genetic analyses. In these 14 years, I helped to implement many new methods for clinical use in addition to being part of an expanding field and a strong research environment.

How did you find your first job/current job?

I found both the position at Department of Clinical Immunology and my current job through job ads online.

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

I had acquired different contact at MOMA during my position at Clinical Immunology, but in my first position outside AU, I did not know anyone beforehand.

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

Some of the most important experiences I learned during my PhD were being independent and resilient, as well as making mistakes and learning from them.

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

I could have used more focus on skills that are important outside academia like quality assurance and a deeper knowledge within statistics.

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 put yourself out there and show the world what you stand for and what your scientific AND personal qualities are. Believe in yourself and the abilities you have acquired during your years at Uni. Try to expand your network and look into which positions there are and where you fit in.

Michelle Mølgaard Thomsen

**Education:**

2011: PhD in molecular biology and genetics
MSc in molecular biology

Jobs

2019-present: Clinical molecular biologist,
dept. of molecular medicine, Aarhus
University Hospital
2017-2019: Molecular biologist, Vejle Hospital
2015-2016: Product testing specialist, Eurofins
2011-2015: Postdoc, AU

Jannie Assenholt, Clinical Molecular Biologist, Dept. of Mol. Medicine, Aarhus University Hospital

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

In general, I have not focused on making early career plans. I took a 1-year education in office and sales after public school, and was hired at a company as an “office-girl”. I soon realized I needed more challenges in my work tasks than making coffee. Therefore, I went to high school, followed by University and here I was offered a 4+4 PhD. I was the type of person who saw my PhD education as “a job”. I had two children during my PhD enrollment period. I had no career plans during my PhD study, however, I sent out an unsolicited application to dept. of Molecular Medicine (MOMA) at Aarhus University Hospital (AUH) when I was writing my PhD thesis.

What kind of position do you have today?

I have a permanent position as clinical molecular biologist in the diagnostic group at MOMA, AUH.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

The most important value for me in a job is the work environment, i.e. great colleagues, a leader who I have a good connection with, and exciting tasks. This is fulfilled in my current job.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

- Molecular biologist at dept. of Biochemistry at Vejle Hospital
This was an advertised job position. I believe I was hired because my technical experience was a perfect match to what they were looking for. I worked with development and management of different analyses in the lab.
- Product Testing Specialist at Eurofins
A recruitment company had this job ad. I think I was employed because my personality was a nice fit, and that we had a great chemistry at the job interview. I had no experience with product testing at all. My job tasks were project management, where I coordinated the tests of different types of products for the Danish Environmental Protection Agency.
- Postdoc, colorectal cancer research group, MOMA, AUH
I sent an unsolicited application to MOMA when I was writing my PhD thesis. First, I was employed for 6 months with wage subsidy, as I was pregnant in that period. When I was on maternity leave, I received a grant from Danish Cancer Society and I was hired as postdoc right after my maternity leave. I think I got this employment as I had technical experience with RNA research and genetics, which was needed.

How did you find your first job/current job?

My current job at MOMA was an advertised position as well. I had contacts at MOMA, since I worked there previously as postdoc. However, my current boss was not employed at MOMA when I did my postdoc, so she did not know me.

Describe a typical day/week:

At MOMA in the diagnostic section, we perform genetic testing. We do this, for instance to assess if a certain patient has a hereditary diseases, e.g. a genetic disease, heart disease, or malignancy. We also assess tumor genetics to investigate if a patient has a genetic variant that would affect the treatment options and outcome. I mainly work with analysis and interpretation of genetic tests and formulate test results for the physicians. Additionally, I am involved in development of lab protocols and procedures and quality assurance.

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

Creative thinking, making new ideas, developmental mindset, project management, prioritizing my work tasks.

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

The psychological aspects of communicating across disciplines.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

Required a broader insight of job possibilities without academia.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

Network is extremely important and is often key to get the dream job.

Nadia Øgaard



Education:
MSc in Physics
PhD Medical Physics

Jobs:
2011- present: Medical Physicist
2008-2011: PhD
2003-2008: Medical Physicist
1998-2003: Research Assistant

Anonymous

How early did you plan your next career step after the PhD?

In my case, I did not have to plan my next career step after my PhD because before my PhD I was already working as Medical Physicist. The opportunity to do a PhD came up, so I went on leave from my position to do the PhD and after I finished it, I returned to my previous position.

What kind of position do you have today?

I work as a medical physicist in an Oncology department at the Hospital.

Why did you decide to go in the direction you chose?

There were two main reasons: First, I was looking for a permanent position and second, there was a colleague who talked to me about the specialty of Medical Physics, about what they were doing, and I found it interesting.

Have you had other jobs prior to your current job – if yes, which? And how did they lead to your current job?

Before getting this job, I worked as a research assistant at the university, but as I said before, I was looking for a more permanent position.

How did you find your first job/current job?

It was thanks to a previous colleague, who I used to work with at the university and he started to work as a medical physicist before me.

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

No, I did not have any other contact than that colleague.

Describe a typical day/week:

In a typical day, my work consists of making radiotherapy plans, calculating how the radiation dose is going to be delivered to the patients. Also, doing quality assurance of the treatment plans and the treatment machines. Research and development activities.

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

Writing articles, doing proper statistical analysis and data analysis are skills that I developed during my PhD that are very useful to me today, because although most of my work consists of clinical work, I am also very involved in research activities.

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

I cannot mention any specific skill developed after the PhD because as I was working as a medical physicist before the PhD, I had already acquired the needed job-related skills. I was fully qualified to return to work as a medical physicist but with more experience.

What would you have done differently during your PhD (if anything)?

I did a lot of small projects that I never published. I think that is something I would definitely have done differently, I should have written more articles.

What specific career advice would you like to share with someone who is just about to finish his/her PhD studies?

You should always go for a job that interests you. For example, something that I like about my job is that there are always new developments, I couldn't be in a completely static job position where nothing changes.

Raul Argota

