

Summary of the DES Spring Meeting 2023

The 2023 spring meeting in the Danish Epidemiological Society was centered on the use of, need for, and setting up of collaborative consortiums in epidemiology. The meeting was held at University of Southern Denmark on March 17, 2023. A theme in all presentations was the importance of finding the right people.

Maja Thiele from OUH shared her best tips for EU grant applications with analogies to dating; find the right match, present yourself in the best way possible, and “hit on” many funding agencies to ensure funding, there will be many rejections.

Jesper Hellas and Mette Reilev from SDU shared insights from their research with the 3 Midskov criteria; Great people, great research, and great payoff. At least two criteria must be fulfilled when settling a collaborative consortium. They further focused on the non-research parts of collaborations with their experiences in shaking up the hierarchy in their research group with different team building events.

Anne Tjønneland from the Danish Cancer Society presented her experiences with the international collaborations in EPIC across EU. She emphasized the reward of being part of the foundation of a vast amount of research projects based on EPIC data. Any epidemiological meeting would be incomplete without a mention of GDPR, which Anne touched upon as EPIC-data is stored in servers outside EU. If Anne could go back in time, she would have made sure that data collection was even more extensive. Mikkel Ankarfeldt from Copenhagen Phase IV Unit followed up with a presentation on pooling data from individual patients in a single server, which subsequently can be analyzed as one single cohort. It sounds genius, but he also mentioned that no perfect recipe for this process exists, which he pointed out with the exaggerated number of approvals required to pool data. Pooling of data may also leave some questions unanswered; what can you expect data to look like? It is difficult to predict what the pooled data contains and if they are adequate to elucidate the research question of interest.

Anne-Marie Nybo Andersen from UCPH presented a look back in the history of the Danish National Birth Cohort. She mentioned potential pitfalls of observational studies but also highlighted the importance of researching peoples’ lives when they live, in real life. Anne-Marie also brought up GDPR, which makes data sharing difficult when working with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable).

The last presenter was Peter Bjødstrup Jensen, datamanager at SDU, who expanded our vocabulary with a presentation on common data models, and semantic and syntactic harmonization. He presented the workflow for how to harmonize data to follow a certain structure (syntactic harmonization) to ensure same data structure from different data providers in e.g., a consortium. Then he explained the semantic harmonization as agreeing on the meaning of the data. His take home message was to embrace the differences in multistudies and work towards developing a way or a system to handle these differences.

At the general assembly Julie Werenberg Dreier presented the past year and thanked the members and board for welcoming her and contributing to the work in DES. Minor changes was made to the board with Henrik Støvring stepping down, and Oleguer Plana-Ripoll elected to the board.