

Alumni Feature: Emil Gregersen, PhD student from Poul Henning Jensen's group

In brief, tell me about your specific field of research and explain why you are interested in this particular area?

I investigated the cellular mechanism *misfolding-associated protein secretion* (MAPS). I wanted to determine if MAPS is involved in the secretion of pathological α -synuclein aggregates from affected cells. This is very interesting as the release of α -synuclein aggregates is believed to play a crucial role in the development and progression of Parkinson's disease, but we do not know the responsible mechanism. It makes me proud to have contributed to the understanding of the molecular pathology of Parkinson's disease with my research. Moreover, it has been very exciting to follow the development in the Parkinson's disease-field, which have made substantial advancements in the last five years.

What was most memorable to you about your experiences in your PhD program, and what was most memorable to you about your experiences at DANDRITE and Aarhus University?

Looking back, I have had many memorable experiences during my PhD. If I should highlight one, it would be attending international conferences and courses. Here, I listened to great talks and presentations, which inspired me and helped me develop into a mature and confident researcher. One of the unique features of DANDRITE is the different focus points of the groups albeit all within the field of neuroscience. It has been very interesting to learn about the other groups' research in the weekly meetings from which I have gained a very broad understanding of neuroscience and relevant research techniques.

Please describe your engagement in social activities at DANDRITE, and what you have gained from it?

I was involved in the development of young DANDRITE (YoDa), where I helped organizing social and scientific events. I gained a lot from both organizing and attending the events as they provided great opportunities to get to know your peers beside their research. I believe non-work-related interactions are important for creating a great work environment and will enhance collaboration between the groups.

I have also twice been part of arranging a small stand at the Festival of Research, where we presented our research to the public. This was a great exercise in communicating detailed research in a simple and clear way using props and videos. Moreover, it was motivating to feel the genuine interest in your research from people outside the field. I can highly recommend it.

What advice would you give to someone who is considering pursuing a doctorate within science?

Do not focus solely on your own project. Be curious and expand your knowledge in different areas. This will inspire you to create better research ideas and improve your research. The network you create in the process can very well help your career in the long run.

I would also recommend that during your PhD-education, you pay attention to which work tasks you enjoy and excel at. This can help you to narrow down your future career path after the PhD. Thus, if you for instance love to teach, then maybe you should engage yourself more in that activity and investigate possible career paths, where teaching are part of the job description.

Text by Emil Gregersen.