WOMEN IN SCIENCE
# Content

**Synapse Release**

Synapse - Life Science Connect’s magazine

This edition of The Synapse Release, in honor of International Women’s Day, is centered around women in science and life science leadership, and topics involving the promotion of gender parity.

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## Women in Science

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Radiobotics are developing stellar machine learning algorithms, supporting doctors in analysing medical images, and making the right decisions. They are collaborating with hospitals in Denmark and UK ensuring immediate clinical impact, eventually benefitting patients. The company, which was founded back in 2017, received a million-sized investment from EU and the Innovation Fund, making it possible to increase their X-AID-project to reach global-scale. (source: Medwatch)

Danish Minister visits Boston in quest for increasing collaborations between universities and companies in Denmark and in the US

Tommy Ahlers, minister of higher education and science, was invited to the official opening of the newly established Danish Innovation Center in Boston, which purpose is to increase the amount of collaborations between Denmark and Boston. Ahlers hopes that we can aspire to build a life-science start-up milieu that mimics the one in Boston, with both access to talent, capital, and guidance. (source: Tommy Ahlers)

LEO Pharma ventures into AI-partnership

Together with 12 other pharmaceutical giants, Leo ventures into a partnership with MIT focusing on exploiting Artificial Intelligence in the discovery stage, for increasing the speed of identifying new molecules, which could be promising. The newly established consortium also includes GlaxoSmithKline, Eli Lilly, and Pfizer. (source: Medwatch)

Synapse Expands in Aalborg

On a mission to bridge the gap between academia and industry in the life sciences, a team of 22 student volunteers dedicate their time off studies to run the the non-profit organization, Synapse. Over the last years Synapse’s reach and network has grown tremendously. Still, there exists a gap between academia and industry in the life sciences, especially outside the Copenhagen area. Synapse has previously hosted two successful events in Aalborg and there is a increasing interest for more events. On behalf of the Synapse team and our Aalborg Ambassador, Line, we are beyond excited to announce that Synapse will now have a bigger presence in Aalborg. With the intention of forming a new Synapse hub in Aalborg, Synapse has welcomed three new ambassadors to join the mission of helping students connect with the life science industry. The new initiative is kicked off with the event “When semester projects get real: from patent to launch” will take place April 10th at Aalborg University, Fredrik Bajers Vej 7H, the event will take participants from A-Z in how to navigate the jungle of patents, funding, and pitfalls on the path to realising your semester project into a professional career.

Bristol-Myers Squibb acquires Celgene for 74 billion dollars

BMS has already announced what will probably be one of the largest acquisitions within life science this year. Combining both companies portfolio of blockbuster drugs, BMS will generate more than 1 Billion dollars in yearly sales, making BMS a clear leader within the industry. (source: Medwatch)

A new team of InnoFounders are ready to advance their start-up ideas to the next stage

21 newly graduated entrepreneurs spread out on 13 teams will get the chance to realise the true potential of their idea. Having been selected for the InnoFounder programme, they will receive funding and advice from March and a year onwards. Six of the selected teams originate from the DTU startup ecosystem, and the ideas range from using Artificial Intelligence to increase the availability of Big Data-analysis (Biogenity) to a novel lab-scale Bioreactor (Tresactio). (source: Innovation Fund)

Roche partners with Copenhagen Business School in order to develop the biotech talents of tomorrow.

Roche sees an immense potential in the students of Copenhagen Business School’s master’s program in Business Administration and Innovation in Health Care. Through the interdisciplinary work that the students get, it is Roche’s hope that the coming biotech talents will be recruited from healthcare master’s at CBS. (source: Medwatch)
## Event Announcements

New events from Synapse and our partners

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Exploring career opportunities with your degree
Exploring career opportunities with Your Degree was our final event of 2018. We had three speakers each representing a different area: big pharma, small biotech and ‘overlooked career opportunities’. The evening offered three different insights in job positions and the road to them from: Jorge Peiro Research Scientist at Nuevolution, Berit Snejstrup Knudsen Project manager at Novo Nordisk, Rasmus Larsen Programme Manager at Novo Nordisk Foundation.

Copenhagen BioScience Lectures - Obesity Theories
Throughout 2018 Synapse collaborated with Novo Nordisk fonden for the Copenhagen BioScience Lectures the final lecture session of the year was held at the beginning of December and presented multiple theories for why and how the obesity epidemic that is sweeping the world is ever growing. One theory was based in genetics and the other in developmentalism. The evening finished off with a very interesting and fast moving discussion between the speakers and may audience members.

Mentorship mid-way
Synapse’s mentorship programme that runs annually between 25 professionals and 25 selected students. The midway event for the 2018/2019 programme offered career building skills. Morten Esmann from IDA spoke about ‘Understand your Why – career planning with a purpose’. This workshop aided participants with tools to think about how to define what they want out of their career and why. Kirsten from KMP+ who also runs the workshop at the Mentorship Kickoff Event, talked about dilemmas within the professional realm as well as networking. As well as the the workshops the midway events offers all participants in programme to catch up and chat about their experiences so far.

Pharmaceutical Value Chain
Synapse’s Pharmaceutical Value Chain event was an evening that took students from all the way from drug discovery, through pre-clinical and clinical phases to life cycle management. The event was full of engaged students and interesting questions, leaving us all more informed than when the evening started.

Synapse Academy x FK select
This CV workshop was the first of the biannual events that Synapse will be hosting in collaboration with FK select. This event takes place at FK selects offices in Lyngby offering at small group of students to get tips and tricks for CVs and job interviews as well as personal feedback on their CVs. This first event was a great success and we look forward to the collaboration going forward.

Synapse New Years Reception
Synapse Alumni help Synapse and the partner ring in 2019 with the Synapse New Years Reception. The evening brought together partners, current Synapseees as well as Synapse alumni for networking as well as presentations about the future of the workforce and leadership. Henrik Schmidt from Momentum Consulting spoke about ‘Millennials in the workforce’ followed by Martin Holm a principal from Heidrick and Struggles giving his take on ‘The future CEO’. The evening was a great start to the year and helped kick start Synapse’s motivation for 2019.
Why should one attend Copenhagen Life Science Summit 2019?

Copenhagen Life Science Summit is a unique opportunity for you to meet the life science leaders of today. We are very excited for the speaker line-up and can personally not wait to hear their talks. This year’s summit will have a focus on sustainability and innovation - both topics that are very current and relevant for all life science students. Besides from the talks, there is time for interacting with your fellow students, the speakers, as well as companies present at the summit. Use the summit to get out of your comfort zone, engage with the speakers, future colleagues, and fellow life science students. You are all there with the same interest at heart, and we are all taking part in elevating the life science potential of Medicon Valley. As preparation for the summit, you can attend the Pre-Summit Event (TBA) where you will get insight on what to do before, during and after the summit. We hope that you will leave the summit with renewed energy and inspiration to develop and elevate your career.

We hope to see you at the Copenhagen Life Science Summit 2019 - it will be an absolutely amazing and an inspirational day!
What value does CLSS bring to the Life Science community?

It is a true cliche that knowledge and innovation is our most valuable asset in Denmark. CLSS brings together engaged student in a fantastic setting - and provides great opportunity to learn, get inspired connect with future collaborators and friends. In short, CLSS provides some of the important ingredients for building a career in life science innovation.

Why should students participate in CLSS?

It is a great opportunity to get inspiration from the always great speaker line-up, expand your network of future collaborators - and the food is great and for free.

Do you have any good advice for students participating in CLSS?

Yes, as for CLSS or any other similar meeting - be present, pay attention, be open, let the messages sink in, and give yourself a bit of time to extract the learning. Equally important, use the opportunity to expand your network - speak to people, ask questions, listen and be ready to tell your story.

Khanh Tran was a participant of Copenhagen Life Science Summit 2018. Read what she has to say about last year!

What is your background? Tell us shortly about yourself.

My background is in pharmaceutical sciences with a specialisation in programming and computational chemistry. I completed my studies in December 2017. Today, I am a co-founder of the start-up Sonohaler.

Why did you choose to participate in CLSS?

I was very intrigued by the speaker line-up, but I also wanted to learn a lot about science but did not get much of an understanding of what was going on outside of academia. And as I had recently completed my studies, I needed to figure out what I wanted to work with. CLSS '18 was a great place for me to explore new opportunities.

What did you gain from attending CLSS?

I gained an expanded view of the life science industry - and more specifically a job.

One of the talks that really stood out for me last year was by Mads Emil Matthiesen from CathVision. He had founded several startups and talked about his experiences with entrepreneurship. He elaborated on the pros and cons of working in a startup, and I got really interested in the entrepreneurial world. After his talk, I thought to myself - why don't I just ask him about it? So, I went up to him, introduced myself, and asked how I could get into the startup environment. Luckily, he knew someone who was currently creating a startup within pharma. He referred me to the startup, we set up a coffee meeting, hit it off, and I got employed. As I got more and more responsibility, I ended up becoming a co-founder.

Do you have any good advice for students participating in CLSS?

Do not be afraid to ask questions and approach people. If you are curious to learn more about the speakers’ topics or their career path, just introduce yourself and ask to learn more - Synapse's speakers are usually very kind, and they are brilliant in their field.
How to Practice Leadership Skills as a student

Jonas is a Molecular Biomedicine student at UCPH and he was recently elected as the new chairman of Synapse. Outside of synapse and studies, Jonas is staying busy as a co-founder at VenomAid Diagnostics - a start-up developing a diagnostic kit for rapid diagnosis of snakebite. We have asked Jonas to elaborate on the importance of leadership skills amid his new role in Synapse, and how he has practiced it throughout his studies.

Leadership 101:

Most often, you would see leadership defined by its supposed opposite: management. Management is concerned with executing routines and procedures, as well as maintaining organizational stability – in the essence, it is concerning control. Leadership, on the other hand, is concerned with direction setting, with novelty and innovation, and is essentially linked to change, movement and encouragement. Another way to phrase it would be that management is the equivalent of déjà vu (seen this before), whereas leadership is the equivalent of vu jàdè (never seen this before). Management implies that a problem/situation has been seen before and to respond correctly to the situation one would simply categorize it and execute the appropriate process. Leadership implies being faced with a problem or a situation that has not been seen before, and being able to navigate in that, a leader must construct a novel strategy. However, it can be difficult to define a word such as leadership as it is constantly changing but having a basic understanding of the word will allow you to build and grow as a leader.

Why is leadership important:

Leadership is an important set of skills, that allow one to inspire, motivate, and push people to break their own comfort zones and explore their capabilities. That one teacher, who inspired you to go extracurricular in your search for answers – that teacher is a leader. Parents are leaders, of course some are more talented than others, however they inspire and encourage their children throughout the first part of life. Leaders are all around us, and without their leadership, we probably would not be where we are today.

Personally, I believe that everyone has some sense of leadership. Every time we are faced with a new challenge, be it starting at university, writing a thesis, starting a new job, etc. we are forced to navigate in somewhat uncharted territory, and when we finally cross the finish line set for that task, we have succeeded in personal leadership.
succeeded in personal leadership. Leadership is all around us in almost everything we do, and I trust that being aware of this, is the first step to harness one's potential as a leader. Of course, there is a definite difference between what personal leadership and leadership is. Introverts might not be as comfortable finding themselves in the shoes of a leader as an extrovert would be, however, you start leading others by leading yourself.

For example, I think inclusion is an important tool within the leadership toolbox. It is important to make sure that everyone feels respected, appreciated and heard. In Synapse I encourage this by making sure that there is room for every opinion to be presented during our meetings, as well as promote transparency between the board and the rest of the Synapse team. In this way, we ensure that people's ideas are heard, taken into account, and when acted upon, the result is presented to the entire team.

How can one learn and further develop leadership skills during their studies:

During your studies, there is a multitude of different options to practice leadership. Besides extracurricular programs such as Future Leaders and Leaders of Tomorrow, which both seeks to develop the future leader in the brightest students, there is myriad of options like; tutoring for new students, being active at the study-café related to your study, taking part in the study-council, and volunteering to plan activities for your class. All in all, these options all present an opportunity to lead smaller groups of people to do amazing things that will impact those around you. Being open to feedback throughout these activities will allow you to learn and discover leadership and whether it is something you would feel comfortable with later on in your career.

Having tutored twice at molecular biomedicine, participated thrice in the MolBioKem cabaret, and having been very active in planning activities related to our study environment (Friday bars, Game nights, Quiz nights, etc), I have had the opportunity to grow my leadership skills by just exploring options found through my study. Looking outside of the University, I joined Synapse quite early during my studies (2nd year of my Bachelor's), allowing me to dive into organizational leadership in a more professional setting. This allowed me to practice teamwork in a completely different setting than what I experienced as a tutor at molecular biomedicine. Having both perspectives has definitely affected the way I interact with the people around me, both inside and outside of Synapse.

It is not always easy for me to be in these leadership roles as I am responsible for tasks and deadlines but above that, I am responsible for other people's well-being. I want to make sure that the people in synapse want to come and want to work, and that they are happy in the organization. Having now been elected as the chairman of Synapse allows me to challenge myself even more. I do not see myself as the perfect leader (yet - might not ever be), but ongoing feedback from the team and people around allows me to further enhance this skill set.

If you want to lead others, start by leading yourself – challenge yourself, get out of your comfort zone once in a while, and explore the options you have at hand – Leadership skills are sought for in almost all corners of Academia and Industry, so I trust that it will be worth your time.
Meet the Vice Chairwoman of Synapse and aspiring Military Veterinarian Officer: Alice Jacobsen

Veterinarian student, EVENTS and Biobusiness Summer School team lead, and Synapse’s first Vice Chairwoman, Alice reflects on her tenure in Synapse, gender equality in Denmark, and her ambitions for both in the future.

How and why did you become involved in Synapse?

I became involved in Synapse through the BioBusiness Summer School in 2016 where I was a participant. At the time I was unsure of what I wanted to do with my degree when I graduated and Synapse seemed like the place to explore this. I chose to join Synapse instead of just continuing to attend events as I also wanted to improve my organisational skills.

What inspired you to run for vice chair?

It felt like a natural progression to run for vice-chair, having previously been a Board member and as the current team lead of both Events and BioBusiness Summer School. I was and still am very passionate about seeing Synapse develop and learn as an organisation. Being vice chair gives me the opportunity to interact with many different facets of Synapse and have an overview of the different ways we can improve Synapse for our core team members as well as all the students and young professionals that participate in our events. It was also a personal challenge for me to take on new and additional responsibility and ensure that I myself develop in the way we hope people do through our events.

"It makes me very proud to see people develop and grow both personally and professionally as a result of interacting with Synapse"

BCG recently released a report, which says “Despite Denmark’s history as a global front-runner with policies that boost gender equality and balance and companies that keep gender diversity high on their strategic agendas, the share of females in leadership teams has only marginally increased over the past ten years, according to the World Economic Forum. Ranked 13th globally, Denmark lags far behind its Nordic peers, which are ranked at the top of the list. In terms of women’s share in leadership positions, Denmark’s rank is 95.” As a woman in leadership, what are your thoughts on this?

As women in leadership, I think it’s a shame that a country as progressive as Denmark doesn’t foster an environment where women thrive in leadership equally with men. A culmination of factors plays a part in this. Often, I think positions are created by men for men, meaning that the qualities they are seeking are typically more masculine.

Women bring different skills to the table and we need to be able to recognise that both in the hiring process and the workplace. Being partly from the UK, it’s clear that they struggle with a greater gender bias within leadership, but simultaneously that there is also a greater awareness and ability to express this. We need to foster an environment where people feel confident about acknowledging, expressing and working to address this bias.

Another factor that I think is a major player in Denmark having less women in leadership is the fact that a large part of parental leave in Denmark is ear-marked for the mother. Our fellow Nordic countries do not have this imbalance, meaning couples can balance their time off work more evenly. I see this reflected in my social circle. The consideration and concerns that my female friends have is significantly greater than their male counterparts. They start making choices and considerations about children that impact their career before they’ve even had children.
Do you see a gender disparity reflected evenly in academia and industry? If so, what do you think Synapse can do to address this? What do you think students can do?

I think this gender disparity is reflected fairly evenly in academic institutions in Denmark and the industry. The higher up the totem pole you go, the less women you see. I think the disparity partially stems from the issues I mentioned previously. To help address this, it is important that Synapse helps inform people of this lack of gender parity; you can't change something that you do not or cannot see. We can also offer a platform for and access to female role models within life science and ensure equal opportunity for everyone to better themselves and the job opportunities that are available to them. I'd like to think that Synapse can help foster a mentality of “I can do that as well!”

Synapse can also offer a platform for and access to female role models within life science and ensure equal opportunity for everyone to better themselves and the job opportunities that are available to them. I'd like to think that Synapse can help foster a mentality of “I can do that as well!”

Synapse has grown tremendously during your time in the organization. What do you think are the organisation’s most important focus areas for the future?

I think Synapse should continue to strive towards helping shape independent, informed and enthusiastic life science students who have the tools and knowledge to start a career successfully in a field of their interest. They can compliment their academic studies through the many opportunities we offer, including one of our soft skills workshops, interaction with professionals or information and awareness in the form of our magazine. Growing as an organisation offers us even more to opportunity to collaborate with a wide range of companies, as will as facilitate meetings between students and companies which are fruitful for both parties.

What have you been most proud of achieving in Synapse?

Our vice-chairman at the time and I co-organised the BioBusiness Summer School 2017 as a two-person team. This is most certainly what I am most proud of achieving in Synapse. Being one half of the team planning our week long seminar and introduction to BioBusiness offered me the opportunity to get up close and personal with the decision making for a larger event. It was hugely rewarding and motivating to see our planning and discussions reflected throughout the week in both the participants and the presentations of the professionals.

What do you find the most rewarding about being part of Synapse?

Seeing students develop as a result of Synapse – both within and outside of the organisation. For me, the most tangible and obvious development can be seen in the students within the organisation. It makes me very proud to see people develop and grow both personally and professionally as a result of interacting with Synapse.

What would you like to do in the future?

Currently I am applying to the military as a Veterinary Officer. Maybe a slightly atypical job for Synapsee. However, Synapse has made me very aware of how important good leadership is. I'd like to take my science background and the leadership skills that I've gained in Synapse and test them out in the "real world".

Written by Melissa Herman
Board Member at Synapse
Becoming a Scientist: 
An interview with Juleen R. Zierath

It is Wednesday the 13th of March. I am heading towards the Maersk Tower, where I have an appointment with Professor and Executive Director Juleen R. Zierath at the Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Basic Metabolic Research. Her office is located at the 7th floor of the iconic building. I knock on the door, wait for someone to answer, and enter the room. She is sitting with a cup of coffee in her hand and gentle melodies of classical music are playing in the background. The interview can begin.

Juleen Zierath was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was the first in her family to go to college and she earned her bachelor’s degree in Secondary Education and Business Administration from University of Wisconsin-River Falls in 1984. Today, she is a Professor of Integrative Physiology at both Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm and at the Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Basic Metabolic Research at University of Copenhagen, where she also holds a position as Executive Director. As such, Juleen Zierath went down a completely different path from the one she initially thought she would follow.

“When I was quite young, a teenager, I recognized that I was really good at teaching. I liked teaching and I was effective at it, so getting the education in pedagogy was very important to me. Back then, I wanted to be a teacher of physical education. I have always been interested in sports and human physiology, and I was on the school’s field hockey, athletics and swimming team. However, I realized that I wanted to do something more than just teach children how to bounce a basketball. I wanted to understand the how. How can I run a marathon better? How can I be stronger? How do my muscles develop if I do weight training? Specifically, I wanted to know how this knowledge could be applied to disease prevention, and that is how I got into research.”

The science behind movement (kinesiology, biomechanics and human physiology) became increasingly interesting to Juleen Zierath and she decided to study for a master’s degree in Exercise Physiology at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. She then started a PhD program in Clinical Physiology at Karolinska Institutet and defended her thesis in 1995. Right afterwards she began a post-doctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School, and in 1998 Zierath accepted an Associate Professor position in Physiology at Karolinska Institutet. But what brings an American researcher to Scandinavia and keeps her there?

“Sometimes your exposure to different environments helps you take another step. When I worked in St. Louis, at Washington University School of Medicine, I heard a lot about the Scandinavian scientists who were performing research into muscle physiology. Every weekend, I would go to the library to read papers, and all the interesting work that I read about was basically coming out of Scandinavia. That’s why I ended up doing my PhD at Karolinska Institutet. I was interested in the science.”
Thus, Juleen Zierath followed the science to Sweden. Her point of departure for the PhD was to understand how physical activity can improve health and in particular the lives of people with diabetes. As such, it was important for Zierath to be coupled with clinical research and stay close to the patient.

“I really appreciated the close collaborations that the basic scientists were having with the clinical investigators in Scandinavia. They really encouraged the model of staying close to the patient and letting the physiology raise the questions to study. I wanted to work with this kind of translational approach, and that’s why I came back to Sweden. It’s a personalized program. I’m in Scandinavia because of the things that were interesting to me.”

Today, Zierath heads research labs, directs foundations, all while identifying future Nobel Laureates. But although she is a successful scientist and prominent leader within the research field, she does not consider herself to be a role model.

“I’m always a little uncomfortable with the notion of role model, because I don’t think that I have the right recipe for everybody. I only have the right recipe for myself. While I don’t perceive myself as a role model, I do realize that for students and younger faculty members I may be. When I interact with students or postdocs, I feel that I can teach them more than just the “science”, like how to present yourself at meetings, and what it takes to succeed in terms of career planning. Here, I feel that I can contribute and be a role model based on my journey from River Falls to Scandinavia.”

Being the first in her family to go to college, Zierath definitely understands the importance of role models. She met her biggest role model, when she started her undergraduate education and really needed someone inspiring to look up to.

“When I got to college, I played field hockey and the field hockey coach was a remarkable Professor. She was interested in biomechanics and kinesiology and she taught a lot of the science courses that I took during my undergraduate education. I remember being especially impressed by her scientific approach and the fact that she was a female Professor. I mean, this was back in the 1980’s and she had a PhD! I could recognize things in her that I couldn’t recognize in the male Professors, and so it was important for me to have her as a role model. She sort of showed me the door and I moved through it.”

Although the number of women with a career in research has increased since the 1980’s, studies show that females are far less likely than their male counterparts to work in scientific fields after graduation. According to Juleen Zierath this is definitely something that needs to be addressed. However, in her opinion it is not only a matter of men versus women, but a matter of diversity.

“One of the challenges that we all have in this world is seeing people who are different than us. To recognize that diversity is important. The more diversity in the room, the better decisions are made moving forward. Not only should we think of having more diversity in terms of sex, but also in terms of background, social experience, race etc. I think the more diversity we have, the better environments we are going to create.”

Throughout her career, Juleen Zierath has been exposed to many different environments. She has spent time at 7 universities or research institutions including University of Wisconsin-River Falls, Ball State University, Washington University School of Medicine, Karolinska Institutet, Hagedorn Research Institute, Harvard Medical School, and University of Copenhagen. Although it has been hard to repeatedly move and settle in new environments, Juleen Zierath encourages people to do the same.

“I think it’s great that I have had the opportunity to see a lot of different environments. Not only as a visitor, but also as a citizen of that environment. I think more people should dare to go to different places, explore new cultures and learn from them. In the end it turned out to be the best thing I ever did. I developed confidence and increased my network, and I believe my leadership style today is a mix of all those things I’ve learned along the way.”

To sum up the interview, I ask Juleen Zierath if she has any additional advice for people who are considering to pursue a career within life sciences.

“1. Do the things you love. It’s always going to be hard work and you have to find joy in what you’re doing. Pick the things that you’re really excited about. 2. Dare to take some risks. And do it because you believe in yourself. Seize the opportunity to really get embedded in another environment, but do it at a time where you don’t have a lot of external responsibilities. It’s harder when you have a family or when you get older. 3. Be open to collaborations and remember to embrace people who are different than you. Those are the things that I would keep my mind open to. But at the end of the day, you should pick and choose the things that matters to you and not the things that someone tells you to do.”

Juleen Zierath is smiling. The coffee cup in her hand is empty. She has answered all my questions and the interview has come to an end. When leaving her office, I can still hear the soft tunes of classical music in the background, racing in a fast pace towards new and higher levels. Maybe that is where Juleen Zierath is headed too?

Written by Emilie Dalbram
Team Member at Synapse
Spying into the silent conversations: From bacterial communication to life saving diagnostics

You do not know them. You do not see them. Yet, they are always around. Whispering, making secret plans, building armies with millions of soldiers - and when they decide to attack, they all attack at the same time. We are talking about bacteria.”

With this opening, Fatima AlZahra Alatrakchi made sure that everyone was glued to their seat during her TEDx Talk in Aarhus back in 2018. The topic in question is quorum sensing, a mechanism by which bacteria can regulate gene expression in accordance to population density through the use of signal molecules, and thus communicate. Quorum sensing allows bacteria to coordinate group behaviour by secretion of specific signal molecules - also known as autoinducers - into the surrounding environment. As the bacteria population grows, so does the concentration of the signal molecules. When a certain concentration threshold is reached, the signal molecules activate corresponding response genes that regulate different behaviours, such as virulence, horizontal gene transfer, biofilm formation, and their ability to take up DNA. Many of these processes are only effective at certain population sizes, and thus quorum sensing is a key behaviour-coordination mechanism for many microbes to assert their sometimes detrimental effects. A deeper understanding of quorum sensing would open up new possibilities for exploitation to combat bacterial infections before they get out of control.

From PhD to award winning entrepreneur

Both during her bachelor’s, master’s and PhD, Fatima had been intrigued by the way that bacteria communicate and the idea of leveraging their communicative behaviour within diagnostics. After having spent years on research and experiencing a personal encounter with a blood infection, she decided to do what many life science students dream of - bring her research even closer to the patients. When asked why she ended up finding herself on the road to become an entrepreneur, she replied “I am a person that hates waste! Especially waste of time. I had used so much time and energy on my project that it would be a waste to leave it as some text in the library without benefiting the patients I was working towards helping. So I decided to take matters into my own hands and follow the research to the door of the patients.”

The existing diagnostics tools of today are not sufficient to detect bacterial infections in the early stages, posing multiple problems: a) bacterial infections are diagnosed late, worsening the infections, b) patients are forced to go to the hospital frequently, where there is a high risk of cross contamination, and c) high costs associated with existing diagnostic laboratory-assessment, which is also time consuming (2–5 days), limiting frequent monitoring.

Taking the matter into her own hands, Fatima’s research was spun out from the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) - the result was PreDiagne - a company dedicated to provide healthcare personnel with diagnostic tools to make early diagnosis early in infections. The sensors being developed by PreDiagne are capable of identifying a wide array of microorganisms and health markers, while being compatible with a measuring device that is wirelessly controlled by a smartphone or tablet, bringing diagnosis to the patients themselves.

“I don’t think it is a need for scientist to explain their science to the general public – I think it is an obligation!”

The invention and Fatima’s academic career has brought home many prestigious awards, including PhD of the year (DTU), Forbes 30 Under 30, and the Lundbeck Foundation Talent Prize.

“It is of course a huge national and international recognition of my work. ” Fatima elaborates. “But it also means that the very best in business and science are contacting me for collaborations and that is even a greater recognition and achievement that will drive us to our goal.”
Scientist, mother and storyteller

Ever since she was young, Fatima has been an amazing storyteller. When she was 18, she had her first book released titled “When World War 3 started” (Danish: Da 3. Verdenskrig brød ud), and next to this, she has written multiple children’s books, as well as been active in public dissemination of science. Watching her TEDx talk, it becomes obvious that she is no stranger to storytelling, a competence that might prove very useful when navigating the entrepreneurial landscape.

“I don't think it is a need for scientist to explain their science to the general public – I think it is an obligation! Research is costly but it is also essential for the society and as scientists we must at least give occasional updates to the public on what we are doing. It is simply too sloppy to say that it is too complicated to understand.”

But being an entrepreneur, award-winning scientist, and active in public science dissemination is time consuming. Especially when you are also a mother of two, but Fatima has managed to cut out all the non-important things to stay focused.

“I have a great husband! And parents and siblings that are always ready to step in and help. I wouldn't have been able to do it without them and they all deserve just as much credit. And then I don't sleep a lot. I cut the waste out of my life – like watching TV or surfing the internet without a goal. For instance I don't have Facebook.” Fatima explains. “And when I work I am very focused. When I am with my kids no work is done until they are in bed.”

Fatima’s journey so far has been incredible to follow, and if PreDiagnose succeed in bringing their diagnostics to market, the impact of her research will be enormous, innovating the way bacterial infections are diagnosed and handled. As for advice to the upcoming entrepreneurs among our readers she says.

“Before you start anything, ask yourself (or relevant others) three questions: Is what I am doing really needed? Am I willing to work on something that will take a lot of effort, risk and instability? And do I have a supporting environment to do what I want? The first two questions the answer needs to be yes, the third question is something you need to consider before you jump into entrepreneurship.”

FATIMA ALZAHRAA ALATRAKCHI IN BRIEF:

Fatima invented a method to spy on the social behavior and communication of bacteria. She holds a PhD in nanotechnology and molecular biology, she is a multiple award winner, a renowned fiction writer and the founder of the high-tech company PreDiagnose. She is an expert in developing micro- and nanosensors for the detection of cellular molecules and microorganisms. Through her research Fatima helped accurately diagnose bacterial infections in sick children. These infections were previously not diagnosable with methods currently available in clinics. As a result of her research and academic track, she has received a number of prestigious awards, including the Lundbeck Foundation Talent Prize for brilliant outstanding research talents in medicine and health and the best PhD of the Year Award by the Technical University of Denmark. She founded PreDiagnose to transform her research into concrete benefit for users. The business magazine Forbes listed her as one of the 30 most influential people under 30 in Europe within Science and Health.

Written by Jonas Arnold Jürgensen
Chairman at Synapse
Promoting open, non-formal education for everyone: Meet Chan’nel Vestergaard, the woman behind Little Pink Maker

Chan’nel Vestergaard is the chair of the board of the nonprofit and NGO community lab Co-Lab (formerly known as Biologigaragen). She is also the founder of Little Pink Maker which provides non-formal educational programmes in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) areas.

Tell me about little Pink Maker?

I started Little Pink Maker myself with extremely little funds as I was unemployed due to my MS. My vision at Littlepinkmaker is to inspire children and adults to love STEAM subjects and to engage the future generation of Scientists, Technologists, Engineers, Artists and Mathematicians. We do this by providing innovative, fun, hands-on educational programmes in these subject areas, which are delivered in non formal educational settings worldwide using a co-teaching model with traditional methodologies that combine innovation, with specially designed tools and tailored unique content to deliver the programme and inspire all.

Tell me a bit about yourself and your background

I am from Liverpool, England where I lived with my mother. Growing up I never had the traditional education and schooling for various reasons. This has impacted my adult life education as I have never been accepted to Universities and colleges and always gotten the answer "No". I have now lived in Denmark with my husband for four years, and two years ago I got diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (RRMS). This diagnose got me interested in science as I wanted to find a cure for this incurable disease. As I learned more about science I became very open to what science could be and I learned how to code and how to 3D print. I then started to become more aware of materials and I asked myself “why am I using these materials?” and “why am I not using biomaterials?”. I signed up for a BioHack academy in the Netherlands and the learning curve of science quickly went uphill. I learned about DNA, genetics, the microbiome and my body, and I learned how to grow anything, which really interested me. This made me ask people about the use of materials and I would ask around “why aren’t we doing new things?” and I got frustrated with the lack of knowledge about biomaterials, so I decided together with my husband that I would start arranging workshops and engage people and teach people. I made my own equipment but soon got tired of using it so I contacted the open laboratory Co-Lab. I became a part of this community where I felt a sense of belonging and the open lab provided me with the space and equipment to host my educational workshops. In October I was selected as the first female chair of the board of Biologigaragen.

One of your missions with little pink maker is to inspire children and adults to pursue STEAM careers, why do you think this is important?

Not just STEAM anymore, everyone wants to be STEAM and be inclusive but we also want to include history. How can you understand science if you do not understand nature? Coding and bioinformatics is great and exciting, but what about the bees? If you put history into the equation you can tell a story and a narrative to what it could be, and if you add in some creative sides and the technology, then people will learn the science naturally. It is by educating and engaging people in science and making information available for everyone that we can solve issues. Learning competencies, and earning qualifications are not the same thing. If you learn competencies you know how to do something and you can apply it. And it works across different countries and cultural barriers. My mother always said “if you know how to sew, you will always have a job” because textiles are everywhere. Learning skills is very important in order to be able to support oneself.

In your little pink maker philosophy you talk about “making sure that education is for all, and not just the privileged” - can you tell me more about this? Why is it important?

To me, education is a fundamental right, I am a huge advocate of open source information and technologies; everyone should
be able to learn what they want, when they want and where they want. Everyone should have equal opportunity to learn and develop skills.

What are some of the difficulties you have overcome in your professional career?

I have a huge personal health challenge with MS, I sometimes have relapse periods where I’m bed bound that’s a huge problem. Also, by not having a traditional educational background it is extremely difficult to raise funding for initiatives or getting people to take my ideas seriously enough. Also within science there will be people who have a hard time with an outspoken female focusing on leadership. It’s 2019, it is supposed to be equal but it is not. There is an educational gap as well, where sometimes people judge you based on the educational background you have. We should not judge based on this, but instead based on skills, drive and motivation.

What do you get out of Little Pink Maker?

Where it leads I do not know. I don't expect it to create me into a multi-million kroner business woman, I just need to be able to pay rent and live a comfortable life with my husband, and I need to know that my community is happy, healthy and thriving. Sometimes I’m challenged a bit by the Imposter Syndrome, and that's okay, but then I tell myself “If I don’t do it, Who will?” and that “Nothing is going to change unless someone makes that change first”. I have experienced amazing things and met amazing people who are willing to help and teach. I have been very lucky with opportunities.

What do you hope to see in the future for public education in the STEAM and history areas?

I would like to see more open science spaces where people can walk in and ask questions and the gender gap should be closed. I would like to see more of these spaces in schools, universities but also outside of those. At Co-Lab we are the only ones in Copenhagen doing what we do, there needs to be more of us. I would love to see more open diversity inclusive spaces arise in the future. I hope to educate teachers to engage about nature and get outside more. If we can’t understand nature, then how can we save our future? And global warming, how can we solve it, if we can’t understand how plastic is made and recycled?

What's next for Little Pink Maker?

Together with a team I have been working on a project called Responsive Design School, for the IDA Response Festival. It is a one-week intensive schooling programme in the last week of May which focuses on applications of synthetic biology, CRISPR and critical design thinking. The programme crosses boundaries and intersections between art, design, science, media, materials, living organisms, additive manufacturing, and speculative design thinking. We also host events throughout the year which can be found on our website, the next upcoming event is Bioshades, which is in April 5th-8th and the event explores sustainable dye with bacteria from soil!

If you are more curious about Little Pink Maker, Co-Lab or want to get in touch with Nel you can find more information on LittlePinkMaker.com
"I've never followed a defined career path"
Interview with Dr. Karin Jexner Hamberg

Dr. Jexner Hamberg, you have a strong understanding of the entire chain of value creation in pharma development. Trained as an MD, you have more than 25 years of international experience from the pharmaceutical industry, including almost 15 years in LEO Pharma. Can you please tell us about your current role?

My current role is heading the Medical and Regulatory Science (MRS) group, which comprises several different functions: Medical affairs, Pharmacovigilance, Quality and Regulatory Science. My key mission is to bring these disciplines together and have them work cross-functionally to serve both patient and business needs. I am also involved with both the R&D and the commercial leadership teams, and having that bridge between R&D and the commercial function is fabulous.

Medical Affairs are the key people in communicating our science at both the disease and product level to the external world. We work closely both with R&D and commercial.

Pharmacovigilance works across the full value chain with a key role in protecting patient safety, including safety in our clinical trials as well as post-marketing surveillance and safety aspects of our products on the market.

Regulatory Science not only guides and leads our regulatory activities throughout the development of new products for patients, but also has key role in maintaining our products and dossiers with regulators on the markets. Importantly, this function also holds a role in defining a path forward where no such path exists via shaping the environment based on science and evidence driven discussions. As such, we have interesting collaborations with academia as well as with key regulators, speaking with them at meetings, discussing how to pave the way forward where there is an imminent patient need for innovation, while also respecting their independent final say. We also cover quality aspects, to ensure we work with a quality mindset.

What is your focus for these areas?

My focus within Lundbeck MRS is a balance between driving innovation for patients through our products and development pathways, and maintaining our high level of quality in our current activities.

"For me, it has very much been a journey where I was seeing and saying “okay, where are the gaps and where are the opportunities for the company?”"

You've recently joined the LEO Foundation Board of Trustees, can you share some reflections on the role of the board and perspective you contribute?

The LEO Foundation is the sole owner of LEO Pharma and as such practices an active ownership focused on making LEO Pharma a success for the benefit of patients living with skin disorders. The Board of Trustees governs investments and grant structures, promoting research in skin disorders and to develop Denmark as a beacon for skin research. The board brings together a wealth of different disciplines to help shape the future – including pharma, technical and legal experts, as well as employee representatives. I bring broad R&D and pharmaceutical experience combined with my knowledge of history of the company as well as my passion for making LEO a success (since I worked there about 11 years ago) to put it in to perspective.
Reflecting on your career as a woman in pharmaceutical leadership, can you share what you feel has been key to your success?

I think it’s very much linked to personality, to always embracing the challenges and opportunities that I see. Many of my current and previous roles have not been roles which have been posted or that one could apply for - some of them were roles that did not exist, and I proposed them because I could see the need for them. For me, it has very much been a journey where I was seeing and saying “ok, where are the gaps and where are the opportunities for the company?”, and always taking that perspective. It was, for me, not from a personal gain perspective, but out of a desire to fix the things that I thought were not working optimally and suggesting ideas openly.

Is this a mindset you’ve cultivated over time?

I’ve always worked this way to be honest, it’s not something that I’ve learned. I’ve never followed a defined career path, it has mostly been driven by curiosity and a willingness to learn new things, to look around corners and see where we are heading and what are the needs that will be required to be served in that journey. It has definitely had it’s bumps and required some resilience, but overall, it’s been a great pleasure to work that way and very rewarding.

And when you say there has been resistance, what do you mean? And how have you overcome this?

As you move through a career, there will always been resistance - often in the form of resistance to change - and you need to work on how to address it in a respectful way. There is a reason why people resist, and one needs to try to see a different picture and perspective. Having that respect for other people and trying to put yourself in others shoes is important.

But I have had a situation where I was coming in to a new role and was told by a colleague that several others had previously been in the role and the last person lasted 3 months. So already, I was approached by a threat the moment I joined. I went back and reflected, “ok, how can I work my way through this?” - I think being pragmatic, resilient, and mindful of different people’s perspectives -- having enough empathy to try to see the reasons behind people’s reactions -- can take you quite far.

But also, “not giving up”, that is something that characterizes me. If I have ideas, I don’t really take “no” for a “no”. I mean I might be faced with a “no”, and if it’s a very clear “no”, I will respect and be loyal to the decision. But I generally try to take things to a level where I first find out if and why there is resistance, then take the idea back and try to work to improve it. There may be a time when the idea fits better than at other times, so finding the right approach, timing, and perspective to bring things forward is important. And that perspective is usually sharpened via interaction and dialogue with others.

Would you say this perspective, of not necessarily taking a “no” for a “no” (and considering the context and best path by which to bring things forward), is a perspective emulated in both your male and female peers?

In terms of perspective, generally I’m focused on ensuring a diversity of perspectives - that can be diversity of gender, ethnicity, experience - because I think that brings a lot of energy and helps improve ideas. Bringing in these different perspectives is key and drives innovation. (In general consideration of a response to a “no”), while I do not have the research in front me, I have the impression that, for example, in applying for new positions, women tend to try to match all the qualification points in the posting and are less likely to apply if they don’t match all of them. Whereas men take more chances and say, “ok, I match one and two”, and apply. Being bold and brave through acknowledging what you know and don’t know, being honest and curious about learning, could also be a way forward. And then don’t let yourself be affected by not getting it - even a few times.

"I don’t really take “no” for a “no”....there may be a time when the idea fits better than at other times, so finding the right approach, timing, and perspective to bring things forward is important. And that perspective is usually sharpened via interaction and dialogue"

In September 2018, Dr. Deborah Dunsire became the CEO of H. Lundbeck A/S – one of the few female CEOs in the pharmaceutical industry. Can you share some reflections on her leadership style and transition?

I think she’s coming in to Lundbeck with a quite difficult mission ahead of her. The previous CEO had a clear mission in terms of making cuts, reductions and savings. While that is certainly not easy, it requires focus and he was excellent at bringing that focus. Where we are now, the CEO role is very different. It’s a role about broadening a pipeline and mindset - and this is much more difficult, actually. The approach she has taken has been quite inclusive, including people across the organization in discussions, sharing perspectives and bringing forward ideas. It’s a good approach, because when you need to solve a difficult challenge, you need to engage and bring more perspectives than your own before at some stage, you lay out a clear route for the future. So it’s situational leadership and it’s a different approach she’s taking – which I think is the right approach for this moment and for the company.
Do you have any advice for young professional women looking to enter the life science industry?

There is no one clear path, but I would advise grabbing the chance while it’s there, being bold, and not only taking roles where you are qualified but also out of a curiosity for learning new things. Don’t get scared off by meeting resistance or facing issues. In professional and personal development, this is often what takes you to the next level in terms of gaining new learnings and finding out how to best apply them. Look at challenges as learning opportunities and don’t get too personally or emotionally affected by them.

Throughout your career, have you had mentors?

Throughout one’s professional life, we each meet people who are greatly inspiring, and especially in the early years of a career, help define our route for what we want to do. For me, this has been through my reaching out and asking another how we could help each other, and what I could do better. So I think doing that – whenever you come across someone that you think is inspiring to you – is helpful.

"There is no one clear path, but I would advice grabbing the chance while it’s there, being bold, and not only taking roles where you are qualified but also out of a curiosity for learning"

With a career spanning 25 years and multiple roles, you have surely developed a significant personal and professional network, how do you maintain this?

I keep in touch with people through work, through LinkedIn, and by linking up with people I’ve worked with previously whenever I have the occasion. It’s a matter of both being responsive but also reaching out to others when you see there’s a change that impacts them; asking them if they’re ok and how they are doing.

If you could give yourself any advice early in your career, what would you share?

I think I would have have stayed longer in my medical role. I would have pursued an academic career before going in to industry, perhaps I made that switch a little too early into industry. Getting that baseline experience in research diligence is important and I can see that. So I’ve been trained and have trained myself through many years of working to have that mindset. Joining the pharmaceutical industry as a physician, you can join in many roles, but having that real-world experience of what really takes place in practical life is very important.

International experience has also been key for me. Working with not only different nationalities in my daily work at Lundbeck, but also spending time in the US, and working closely with Japanese and French teams, has given me some perspectives on cultural impact and helped me find new and respectful ways to interact and work with people with a different background. This has been – and still is - tremendously important, especially in the context of a global pharmaceutical company.
7 Inspiring Female Life Scientists You Should Know About

Rosalind Franklin

The story of Rosalind Franklin has become one of most well-known instances of women’s achievements being overlooked. In 1952, her picture simply known as ‘photo 51’ changed biology forever. It was this image of the x-ray diffraction of DNA that led Watson and Crick to deduce the double helix structure. She sadly died before Watson, Crick and Wilkins received the 1962 Nobel Prize for the discovery of the DNA double helix. The Nobel Prize is never given posthumously, meaning she was never fully credited for her ground-breaking work.

Margaret Ann Bulkley

In the 19th century women were not allowed to be doctors, but that didn’t stop Margaret Ann Bulkley. Under the false name ‘James Barry’, she became a respected doctor who was known throughout the British Empire. In 1826 she became the first European doctor to perform a successful Caesarean section. Back home in the UK she was a public health advocate, fighting for better sanitation, nutrition and care for injured service men. Her secret wasn’t discovered until after her death, but she died a war hero and ‘Dr James Barry’ was the most respected surgeons of the day.

Rita Levi-Montalcini

When Italian dictator Mussolini banned Jews from academia in 1938, Rita Levi-Montalcini was forced to set up a laboratory in her own home. She was already a doctor, with a keen interest in neurobiology. From here home-made laboratory she studied the growth of nerve fibers in chicken embryos. She was granted a fellowship at Washington University, where she replicated her work on nerve fibres. In 1952 she isolated Nerve Growth Factor, a groundbreaking discovery that earned her the 1986 Nobel Prize.

Rosalyn Sussman Yalow

During WWII the University of Illinois began offering teaching positions to women, in order to fill the gaps left by men being sent off to war. One such woman was Rosalyn Sussman Yalow, becoming the only woman out of the 400 members of physics department. She was particularly interested in medical physics and went on to develop the radioimmunoassay (RIA). RIA was a revolutionary technique, greatly improving the accuracy and clarity of substance labelling. For her work, Rosalyn was awarded the 1977 Nobel Prize.

Françoise Barré-Sinoussi

After receiving her PhD in 1975, Françoise began investigating retro-viruses. Her world-leading knowledge led her to discover the role of HIV in causing AIDS. The 2008 Nobel Prize was awarded to her for her work, which has subsequently led to a radical improvement in AIDS treatment and prevention.

Carol Greider & Elizabeth Blackburn

Carol and Elizabeth are a shining example of women in science supporting each other, working together to make pioneering discoveries. The pair were awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize for their discovery of the role of telomerase. Elizabeth discovered that telomeres prevent chromosomal degredation, and together with her PhD student Carol, they discovered the enzyme telomerase.

If you want to know about more of the amazing women who have helped to shape modern life science, please check out https://www.beyondcurie.com.

Written by Emily Barot
Team Member at Synapsis
Addressing Gender Inequality in Denmark

According to a new inform from the World Bank Group, there are only 6 countries in the world where both men and women are considered to have exactly the same rights. Often considered an equal opportunities country, other recent statistics indicate that Denmark is quickly falling behind their Scandinavian neighbors.

The Danish Society for Women in Science (DANWISE) was founded to address the gender inequality issues that prevail in Denmark. DANWISE is a non-profit organization that represent women from academia, industry and business spanning Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) and Humanity areas in Denmark. The aim of DANWISE is to create change that reduces the gender gap in the STEMM and humanities areas. These changes will be made through initiatives and programs that aim to increase awareness of gender imbalance in STEMM areas, improve hiring of women into higher academic and industry positions, and to bring forth new policies in government that improve gender diversity at the universities and in the industry.

Andrea Ansenjo Martinez, Founding Team Member of DANWISE, shared with us the purpose and work of DANWISE.

Here do you see the need for an organization like DANWISE in a country like Denmark where, a priority, it seems that gender equity is already a reality?

It is true that Denmark usually is on the top of the rankings for equality and we might believe that we have a balanced culture, but the numbers say otherwise.

Gender diversity and diversity in general are not yet a fact in Denmark, especially in STEMM areas, and we need to keep working on getting there.

Actually, Denmark is the Nordic country with least percentage of women positioned in full professorships in academia, with only 21% according to official data from the Ministry of High Education and Science (Videnskabeligt personale påуниверситетerne 2017). Furthermore, the gender pay gap stands at 15.1% in Denmark. In addition, women tend to spend periods off the labour market more often than men, due to childcare. Together, these facts indicate that although Denmark has good social equality, there is still a need for improvement for gender equality in the labour market and especially in science fields.

What are the concrete objectives of DANWISE for the short-term? How do you plan to achieve them?

We are only recently founded but we are planning a lot of events and workshops for this year. Specifically, we aim to work together with universities and funding bodies to try to improve awareness about gender biases in hiring rates and grants awarded to women. Concrete measures would include the use of gender neutral language in job postings as well as structured approaches to conducting interviews, which will help to reduce the bias in the recruitment process. As many of the bias are unconscious, one of the events we have on the pipeline is a workshop on unconscious biases that will help to increase the awareness in this regard.

We are also planning different events and workshops to help our members to be more self-confident and successful including CV writing, grant writing and leadership workshops.

"Having role models is important to inspire young women to consider and succeed in traditionally male-dominated fields of study, such as STEMM"

We also think having role models is important to inspire young women to consider and succeed in traditionally male-dominated fields of study, such as STEMM. We have initiated a women's network to promote women in in the STEMM and humanities fields, so they can get more visibility for their work in Denmark. We are also preparing a mentorship program, where more experienced women in these fields can guide younger researchers and inspire them through the different steps in their career.
In general terms, it seems that there has been some improvement in Denmark regarding gender balance in Denmark and these are reflected in some reports like the one from the World Bank Group. Do you think this improvement is enough?

The world Bank Group report focus on equal legal standing between men and women. The indicators they take into account (freedom of movement, right to get education, a paid job, a pension, managing assets, ...) don’t represent any of the gender balance issues that we have in Denmark and that DANWISE focuses on, including:

- The representation of women on the corporate boards of the largest publicly-listed Danish companies stands at 31%.
- Only one in seven executives of those same companies is a woman. In senior and mid-level management across the private and public sectors, female representation has remained unchanged over the past five years.
- Fewer than one in four entrepreneurs are women, which is below the European average.
- The proportion of women in parliament has declined by three percentage points since 2013.[AAM1]

As I said, women have the same legal rights as men, but there is still a lot to do to fight against this gender discrimination. I think it is about time that women can get real equality in the workplace.

Gender diversity and diversity in general are not yet a fact in Denmark, especially in STEMM areas, and we need to keep working on getting there.

What is the reason for such big differences in gender balance at the more senior positions in research?

In my opinion one of the biggest causes is that the people now occupying the decision-making positions (in hiring and funding bodies committees) are men, and there is this unconscious bias in recruitment and selection of funded projects that it is proven to discriminate women.

Another cause is that more than more than 40% of women with full-time jobs in science leave the sector or go part-time after having their first child, while only 23% of new fathers do, which affect career growth.

The current board and core team of DANWISE appear to only be women. Is DANWISE an organization only for women?

Actually it is not, and in our advisory board we have two male members, Anders Lund (Director of BRIC) and Marcus Jørgensen (Project Associate at Novo Nordisk and former chairman of Synapse). DANWISE aims to be as inclusive as possible, and we will be delighted to have male members too, both in the board and in the core team, as we think that it is important to have as many different points of view as possible. For now we are only women because we couldn’t find any males willing to be part of it. It is a general trend that gender balance is a fight that women should do alone, however, from DANWISE we think we should be working on equality all together, both men and women and we all need to continuously make an effort to reach a more fair and balanced society, which will benefit everyone.

What would be your message for women that face gender imbalance in their career?

Don’t accept that situation as normal, if you feel you are being discriminated against, seek advice and guidance wherever you can, both inside and outside the workplace. Now most universities and companies are starting to have specific departments to address the issue.

And more important, remember you are just as competent as your male counterpart and therefore deserve the same opportunities.

Are you positive about the future? What is your hope?

Yes, I am really positive about the future. I think we can already see that there is a social movement coming that supports real gender equality.

To achieve this gender balance in STEMM fields, I think that the DANWISE initiative is important and necessary and will help to improve awareness of the gender inequality issues in Denmark. It won’t happen overnight, but hopefully the actions of DANWISE will slowly implement the change that is needed to improve our society and careers.
Partners Insights

Featuring Boston Consulting Group, Novo Nordisk Regulatory Affairs, and Roche
My journey from small Biotech to big Pharma

An intuitive feeling of belonging hit Helle Jacobsen when she first entered the Roche Innovation Center Copenhagen (RICC) site last year in June. From a wide-ranging background in several small biotech companies, a position as post.doc. at Cambridge University, and working in both project leadership and in the oncology field with antibodies and cancer vaccines, Helle joined the Discovery group at RICC as a Principal Scientist.

RICC is the home of RNA Molecule Research for Pharma Research and Early Development (pRED) in Roche, and functions as a research center, investing in its drug discovery and technology platform to discover important novel medicines across multiple therapeutic areas in the rapidly emerging field of RNA-targeted drugs.

Bringing her husband and young son, Helle went to Cambridge University for a 2-years post doc position. “The opportunity for me to work amongst some of the brightest minds in the field was a great way to put myself to the test and it gave me a strong believe in my own abilities.”.

Getting up to speed with the technology and using her experience from oncology, immunology and auto-immunity, Helle slowly got to know the organization and through a re-organization Helle entered a new role as technical project leader, where her knowledge and skills in the field of technical project leadership came to use. Helle perceived this new role as a signal of the organization’s confidence in her abilities.

How do you inspire your team and help them be their best?

Transparency and working together as a team are key elements for me and it’s a part of my work philosophy. I firmly believe that focusing on what we are good at and empowering people in areas where they thrive gives value to the whole team. I see an agile mindset in my team, and my role is to inspire this on a daily basis. Taking ownership, giving trust to my team and ensuring alignment within the projects through clear objectives can serve as an excellent enabler for this. Committed colleagues and a good work environment are essential to me,” she explains.

What do you see as different, in your opinion, working in a small company compared to a big organization?

“What I see as different from my previous job and sometimes a challenge in a big organization is aligning the different project teams, often located all over the world. I'm therefore aiming at rallying the project teams together around clear objectives and with a clear focus on the target and streamlining the communication across the organisation. An advantage, in my opinion, in a small company is the close community and shared feeling of responsibility. I learned that by stressing this to my team and my colleagues, regardless of the size of the organization, I can imbue that same feeling. Collaborating across a big international organisation means a lot to me.”

What would be your advice for students in regards to a career in the Pharma Industry?

“My advice is to thoroughly explore the area you find most exciting for you and go for it. Believe in yourself and never doubt yourself. I believe that with that mindset and commitment you will be a success in all the things you do. I strongly recommend to study or get a position in a international environment. There is a lot of opportunities out there for seeking funds or through company programs. Professionally I learned to be more confident in myself and my abilities, and I got a solid network and friends for life,” she concludes.

Written by Christina Walsted Site Admin & Communications Roche Innovation Center Copenhagen A/S
Meet Ingrid from Boston Consulting Group

Are you curious about how it is like to be a Management Consultant with a life science background?

We think you are, and that is why we have talked to BCG Associate Consultant, Ingrid Deigaard, about how she applies her educational background in her job. Ingrid is 31 years old and has a Master’s & Pd.D. in Physics from the University of Amsterdam.

How would you describe your field and main tasks?

I am working as an Associate Consultant. The job is project based and you typically work in a larger team sharing tasks and responsibilities. Our projects cover a wide range of industries as well as topics such as strategy, operations optimization, and reorganization. As an Associate, you are working on smaller pieces of larger projects. My tasks include market research, quantitative and qualitative analyses, and preparing presentations.

What are the most exciting and challenging aspects of your job?

One of the most exciting aspects of working in consulting is the impact you have and the complex problems we help answering. We are helping some of the largest companies define their future direction and we are supporting them in solving their current issues. The high impact of our projects also makes it challenging – our clients use our input to base defining choices for their company, so it is very important that all the groundwork and research is done with a rigor providing comfort that the basis for the decision is correct.

As an Associate Consultant, you are thrown into the deep end, which is both enjoyable and frightening. Every client is different and no two projects are the same. It is therefore required that you find it exciting to be challenged with new topics and industries constantly. You are, however, never alone and there will always be a team of fellow consultants, project leaders, and partners who will guide and support you throughout the project. Personally, I find it very fulfilling to be challenged and gain insights into new industries and topics on a very frequent basis.

How do you apply your education in your job?

As a physicist, I am trained in solving complex problems through logic thinking. Another key element in the physics education is the art of testing hypotheses with data. These two skills enable me to be very fact and logic based in my research as well as being understanding of what type of data is needed to support the formed hypotheses. Furthermore, as a science graduate, I am very comfortable with math and have a good intuition on numbers and correlations. This helps me when building market and financial models which are widely used in project work.

Coming from international research at CERN, I am used to working in an international environment with many stakeholders, tight deadlines, and frequent presentations. These are skills used on a daily basis – both in team and client settings.

What are the three most important things to you in your job at BCG?

The people

Consulting is ultimately a team sport. Working in BCG can be quite challenging at times. Having a group of very talented and dedicated people in your team all working towards the same deadline is one of the key enablers in making it enjoyable.

Ever changing work

I thrive when I am learning new things. At BCG, I get to explore new fields regularly and I am constantly developing my skill set and becoming familiarized with new industries.

Responsibilities

From day one on the job, you are given your own work and you are responsible for delivering the expected output. I was, as an example, asked on my first project to build a model of the full bread market in Russia. Even though the responsibility lies with you, you can get support from your fellow teammates and your project leader in terms of guidance and prioritization of tasks.

Why do you consider BCG a desirable company to work in?

In BCG, there is a strong focus on learning and development -
both through casework and through dedicated training. Immediately after joining BCG, you spend two weeks on training – 1 week with the newcomers in the Nordics and 1 week with everyone who has joined in the region. At the training, you learn the skills needed in consulting, and at the same time, you build connections to fellow associates across the region. The learning program continues throughout your BCG career and training have a very high priority internally.

Another key aspect making it desirable to work in BCG is the social life and the friendships you build. There are many organized activities in the office such as sports events, family events, summer parties, as well as the informal Friday bars. Despite the recent growth of the staff in the Copenhagen office, the “family feeling” has remained.

Want to know more about BCG?

Boston Consulting Group is a global management consulting firm and the world’s leading advisor on business strategy. They partner with clients from the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors in all regions to identify their highest-value opportunity, address their most critical challenges, and transform their enterprises.

Read more about BCG on [www.bcg.dk](http://www.bcg.dk).

If you are curious about management consulting and BCG you can meet and learn from BCG consultants during the case competition at the annual Synapse BioBusiness Summer School. The one week program will take you through the business side of life science and teach you about everything from patent laws to marketing and regulatory affairs. This year the summer school will take place from August 12th to August 16th. Applications will open in June, stay up to date with the latest news through our website and our Facebook page.

**Synapse BioBusiness Summer School 2019**

**August 12th - 16th**

Applications open June
What Women in Science means to me: from academia to pharma

I never felt side-lined, hindered, or treated as a minority throughout my school and university education. But, as I climbed further up the education ladder, my perspectives on gender stereotyping and the gender divide changed. This was quickly followed by the realization that both men and women may be to blame.

Why we need initiatives like Women in Science

From my experiences, I believe there are four issues at work here: Our belief that gender stereotypes are entirely innate, the downgrading of women by women as well as men, the mindset that women of childbearing age are high-risk hires, and the gender pay gap despite equal workload.

Have we been further widening the gender divide?

Jane Goodall was my childhood hero, and the fact she was female was irrelevant. I was naturally drawn to science and nature from the moment I grasped how to walk. Scouring my family back garden, I would dig up worms and woodlice before entrapping them in a transparent container to study them.

When it came to education, I was never a fan of pure mathematics. Yet, when I was introduced to the world of physics, where numbers are applied to the physical world, something inside me ‘clicked’. The same happened when I began solving chemical equations and understanding action potential propagation in neurons.

I vividly remember, as a teenager, outperforming my peers on spatial and mental 3D rotation questions in an intelligence test. I was outspokenly proud, but this sense of achievement was abruptly cut short. “These are male-associated attributes”, I was told. Thoughts would subsequently fly across my mind: Is there something wrong with me? Does this make me less of a woman?

No, is what I would now tell my younger self. Whilst studying Neuroscience at university, I discovered there are of course sexual dimorphic differences between men and women that underlie our different physical appearances and brain architectures. However, gender/sex-specific cognitive abilities are in fact less significant than what you may believe. In fact, it is our experience, education, and/or culture that predominantly shape these abilities and have subsequently exaggerated these differences. Does this mean we are mostly to blame for gender stereotyping? Is it just a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Women versus women in the workplace

More than 50% of the students on my Neuroscience university course were women. It was only once I started climbing the career ladder that I noticed the gender ratio swaying the other way. This related not only to the proportion of men within the field, but also to those holding the higher positions of responsibility. Is it because women take time off to look after children, leaving them little time and opportunities to surpass their male peers? Or is it primarily due to gender stereotyping, whereby superiors disregard women of child-bearing age, irrespective of whether they would like to have children?

Most of my direct superiors, during my Masters and PhD, were (unexpectedly) women. And not just women, but leaders and mothers. Heading research groups whilst heading families, I admired them. But, watching from afar versus working directly under some of these women unveiled another side to the story, and it made me uncomfortable. It was a battle for these women to gain the recognition and obtain the promotions for their current positions so, surely, they would help and encourage their female employees to battle through like they did? Unfortunately, that was not the mindset I experienced. Instead, I often experienced push-back, and discouraging and dispiriting words. “Since it was hard for me, I will make it hard for you – this is what strengthens a woman” – this vicious circle of mistreatment and “queen-bee syndrome” is only holding women back.

After having left academia, I entered the pharmaceutical world with a depressing but hopefully misshapen view of leading women in the workplace. Regulatory Affairs is a women-dominated field, so the prospect of encountering this same phenomenon was at the back of my mind, but also made me evermore determined to turn this self-fulfilling prophecy on its head. Thankfully, my presumptions were cast away, deep into the abyss. In the little time I have been in pharma, I have...
experienced working alongside, being managed, and being led by numerous inspiring, influential and hardworking women, one of which went over and beyond to encourage my professional development.

Women versus men in the workplace

Men and women may display different working styles in the workplace, but when both exhibit the same behaviour they are often perceived differently by others. It is this gender gap and mindset that needs to be eradicated. If a male leader makes an unpopular decision, it will be received with acceptance and understanding. However, if it is made by a female leader, this will be met with harsh criticism. A gender gap also exists in humour; adding jokes to a business presentation is deemed advantageous to a man rather than a woman, whereby the former's leadership capability and performance is perceived as higher and the latter's is perceived as lower.

Male and female leadership approaches are not always the same, but both can develop the qualities and skills of the other to add further value. Male leaders may be more inclined to take actions, stick to their own ideas of how to solve problems, and prefer a strong hierarchal structure, whilst women prefer to analyse problems, collaborate, and involve the team. In other words, men tend to be transactional leaders whilst women are more akin to transformational leaders. Interestingly, the transformational model is associated with higher success rates in many industries due to better performance, and more satisfied and stimulated employees. Nevertheless, this just demonstrates how not one leadership style is ultimately better than the other – they're just different. Our attitudes towards female leaders, be it in science, pharma, or the tech world, needs to change. Gender stereotypes portray women as being less reliable, and not analytical or science-savvy. Yet, these myths have all been debunked.

Shifting the mindset

Women in Science is gaining more recognition, but we need to help instil and nurture the curiosity and passion for science within the younger female generations, especially with growing evidence that gender stereotypes are primarily created by us. We need to change our minds; Why don't we encourage girls to delve into the world of science, technology, engineering and mathematics? Why are leading men in positions of power deemed as trailblazers, whilst women in the same positions are considered stern and unfriendly? Why is there still a gender pay gap for the same level of work? Why must there be something wrong with career-driven women who pick their profession over having children? Why is it always the man who is picked over the woman at the final hiring stage if the latter is of child-bearing age? And if one were to have children, should we not restructure roles and enhance our tech-saviness to encourage remote working?

Thanks to a 2012 Danish law for achievement of equal numbers of men and women in management positions, more women now occupy boardroom and management positions in the larger Danish companies. Novo Nordisk is a company that has a strong stance on diversity in the workplace, from entry level to top management. By the end of 2018, 40% of managers were women and this remained unchanged since 2017. Fewer women were given managerial positions, but more were appointed to senior management positions.

It seems we are slowly shifting our mentalities, but it is time this is fully reflected in the real world. I believe self-awareness and persistence are two key behaviours both men and women need to adopt when it comes to eradicating gender stereotyping and encouraging equal opportunities. From birth and throughout education, boys and girls should be given the same opportunities and encouragement to help lead them to their true career calling. We may be in a man's world today, but I'm not advocating for a woman's world. Instead, we need to advocate for a world beyond gender.

Written by Elisabeth Buhl Thubron is a Senior Regulatory Affairs Graduate at Novo Nordisk.

To learn more about the Novo Nordisk Graduate Program in Regulatory Affairs and other employment opportunities at NovoNordisk, visit novonordisk.com
Book reviews

Inspired by what you’ve read and looking to read further about science and stereotypes surrounding topics of gender, women in leadership and achieving gender parity? Check out these recommendations.

The Gendered Brain by Gina Rippon

In her latest book, Professor Rippon carefully and thoroughly demolishes the age-old myth of a ‘female brain’. Taking the reader through modern advances in neuroscience, as well as the so-called “evidence” that has upheld the belief that women’s brains are somehow different, Rippon illustrates how gendered stereotypes from our earliest moments shape our selves and even our brains. With many journalists stating that this book could do more for gender equality than any number of feminist manifestos, this book is an absolute must-read.

Women and Power by Mary Beard

A two-part lecture by Professor Mary Beard turned into a pocket-sized read, this is a book you’ll devour in a single sitting. Professor Beard masterfully illustrates how women are often perceived and stereotyped when speaking and presenting in public forum, in comparison to men. An English scholar and classicist, Beard then traces the origins of these stereotypes, examples of which the author presents as recently as the 2016 Presidential election, to their roots as far back as Homer’s Odyssey. Ultimately, Beard identifies our cultural assumptions about power and women’s relationship to it, provoking the question of whether our understanding of power itself should be redefined.

Lean In by Sheryl Sandberg

Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, shares her own experience to shed light on ways women and men can work to achieve gender parity. Sandberg provides practical advice on negotiation techniques, mentorship and building a satisfying career. Taken together, Sandberg suggests specific steps women can take to combine professional and personal fulfillment, and demonstrates how men can benefit by supporting women both in their professional lives and at home. A book that has led to international “Lean In” networks around the world and the foundation for annual research with McKinsey & Company on the state of women in corporate America, this book is a must-read.

Written by Melissa Herman
Board Member at Synapse
COPENHAGEN LIFE SCIENCE SUMMIT 2019
May 9th at Børsen

ABOUT
Copenhagen Life Science Summit 2019 is a full-day conference for life science students. This year's summit will be the fourth consecutive summit bringing together visionary minds to give idea-focused talks, fostering learning and inspiration among the participants. A great opportunity to engage with the speakers, company representatives, and like-minded students.

SECTIONS OF THE DAY

Session I - Sustainability in Life Science
How the continuous focus on sustainability will shape the future of life science - from companies to students.

Session II - Creating an Innovative Environment for Students
How to facilitate an innovative and collaborative environment between students and professionals.

Session III - Future Hopes: Startups
Six promising startups will share their concept and science to inspire future entrepreneurs.

"A fantastic conference where key life science talent is joint together – very optimistic for the future of life science in the region"
- Kim Andersen, Senior VP at Lundbeck

OPENING AND WELCOME

Jonas A. Jürgensen
Chairman of Synapse
- Life Science Connect

Brian Mikkelsen
CEO of Dansk Erhverv

SESSION I

Mauricio Graber
CEO of Chr. Hansen

Claus Stig Pedersen
Head of Global Sustainability and Public Affairs at Novozymes

Katherine Richardson
Leader of UCPH’s Sustainability Science Centre

SESSION II

Jens Nielsen
CEO of the BioInnovation Institute

Johanna Asklin
Head of Business Development, Life Science at LU Innovation

Niclas Nilsson
Head of R&D Open Innovation at LEO Pharma

Buy your tickets at synapse-connect.org/clss/
DEADLINE: April 26th, 2019

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