

DKK 82 Million for Turning out Health Innovation Specialists

INNOVATION

New cross-disciplinary talent programme will help create the most talented innovation leaders of the future. The target group is experienced researchers, health professionals and specialists, and the ambition is to develop ground-breaking solutions for the future life sciences.

Over the next five years 64 creative talents will go from being experts to entrepreneurial innovation leaders. This is the main idea behind a new national talent and continuing education programme launched by the health science faculties at Aarhus University and the University of Copenhagen in close cooperation. The programme, which is called the BioMedical Design Novo Nordisk Foundation Fellowship Programme, is a scholarship-based programme receiving DKK 81.6 million from the Novo Nordisk Foundation over the next five years. It is targeted at experienced specialists across industries and professions, and the objective is to create exceptional innovation leaders in the cross field between the public healthcare system, universities and industry. Compared to similar existing programmes inspired by BioDesign at Stanford University, the BioMedical Design Novo Nordisk Foundation Fellowship Programme will be the largest programme of its kind.

The Fellowship talent programme is especially targeted at researchers, businessmen, engineers and doctors with an interest in other areas of specialisation than their own, and who have the courage and curiosity to become entrepreneurial innovation leaders mastering interdisciplinary teamwork. In addition to fostering innovation leaders, the programme aims to facilitate new life science start-ups as well as new innovation-based research projects in Danish universities and hospitals.

'Denmark must be a large global player when it comes to turning out knowledge-based start-ups with innovative medical equipment or biotechnological solutions in the pipeline. With this initiative we focus on a step further down the value chain than previous accelerator initiatives. It is humans, not technology, that design solutions to meet the needs of the users. Therefore, study programmes and talent development specifically targeted at life science innovation are essential', the main grant recipient Sys Zoffmann Glud from INNO-X Healthcare at Aarhus University says about the motivation for establishing the talent programme.

Niels-Henrik von Holstein-Rathlou, Head of Research and Innovation Grants at the Novo Nordisk Foundation, says that 'With this grant for establishing the new national programme the Novo Nordisk Foundation aims to strengthen Danish innovation within healthcare and to contribute to the development of new ground-breaking solutions'.

Hospitals Provide Solid Platform for Testing Solutions

The talent programme is supported by the five Danish regions, which will take turns opening hospitals to Fellowship participants who wish to monitor the everyday work of the staff, identify needs and develop new solutions for clinically relevant problems.

This will give Fellowship participants unique insight into the healthcare system and a chance to build a personal network among clinicians and researchers.

As part of their training and skill achievement the Fellowship participants must share parts of their learning about innovation and the needs they identify in clinical practice with the health professionals, just as they are required to cooperate with the departments on solving existing challenges. Each year two hospitals are chosen as clinical main hosts under the BioMedical Design Novo Nordisk Foundation Fellowship Programme, just as a number of additional hospitals are chosen for verification of development needs. The first year Rigshospitalet and Aarhus University Hospital will act as main hosts.

The Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs Applauds New Life Science Mindset

'One of the recommendations presented by the Growth Team for Life Science in the spring of 2017 was that education in innovation and entrepreneurship must be strengthened in the life science research and education environments. Therefore, an initiative like the BioMedical Design Novo Nordisk Foundation Fellowship Programme is both encouraging and innovative, as it holds potential in the short run for providing a pipeline of productive solutions within the medico and biotech area that may contribute to the growth of the industry', says Kasper Lindgaard from the Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs' new Life Science department, which welcomes the new initiative.

A Fellowship project lasts 10 months, during which the participants, in addition to theory and learning, will focus on developing product solutions and business models. It corresponds to a fulltime position, and during the project period the participants receive a monthly scholarship at postdoc level. A total of 16 individuals from Denmark and abroad are accepted into the programme each year. The programme expects to open for applications in November 2018. The first round of projects will begin in August 2019.

The Parties Behind the Initiative:

INNO-X Healthcare, Department of Clinical Medicine, Aarhus University strives to promote a stronger health innovation culture through competence development among students, researchers and professionals within healthcare. In addition, the unit researches the need for innovative competences in the healthcare area and how entrepreneurial methods can support researchers' and health professionals' ability to translate challenges and research results into new initiatives. www.innox.au.dk

SUND, University of Copenhagen has over the past years established a series of innovation and entrepreneurship training initiatives targeted at students via partnerships with actors in Copenhagen under Copenhagen Health Innovation and internationally under the European EIT Health network. With the BioMedical Design Novo Nordisk Foundation Fellowship Programme SUND will add new postgraduate-level initiatives to this list. www.sund.ku.dk, <http://copenhagenhealthinnovation.dk/>

The Novo Nordisk Foundation

The Novo Nordisk Foundation is a Danish foundation with corporate interests. The objective of the foundation is twofold: 1) to provide a stable basis for the commercial and research activities conducted by the companies within the Novo Group, and 2) to support scientific and humanitarian purposes. The vision of the foundation is to contribute significantly to research and development that improves the lives of people and the sustainability of society. www.novonordiskfonden.dk

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