



## Spearheading dementia research

Researchers at the Danish Dementia Research Centre work extensively in national and international networks to boost their research, but also to ensure that new findings are disseminated as widely as possible.

The Danish Dementia Research Centre at Rigshospitalet deals with treatment, research and dissemination. The centre has approximately 2,000 patients with degenerative brain diseases from all over the country and receives about 1,000 new referrals each year. A large number of the patients suffer from memory loss and dementia.

“This is a growing medical field, hence the importance of being active in international cooperation. We measure ourselves against the best clinics around the world – both with regard to treatment and dissemination. Many of our research and dissemination activities take place in different kinds of networks, also nationally. For example, we’ve initiated a network for all of the 30 or so memory clinics in Denmark, providing an important tool for developing exchange and achieving an evenly spread high standard of treatment across the country,” explains Professor Gunhild Waldemar.

Part of the centre’s work involves a research alliance with seven other hospitals in Denmark with active research profiles, with which it cooperates and conducts a dynamic exchange on various projects. One of the projects, for example is investigating whether physical exercise has a positive effect on Alzheimer’s disease.

### National and international partnerships

The centre is also an active member of a European research network for gathering data and research findings on the rare hereditary neurodegenerative disorder Huntington’s disease. A large number of the 300-400 Danish patients with this disease are treated at the centre or at partner centres in Aarhus and Odense – and this provides a solid basis for joint European research.

“On a national level we’ve also established a network of dementia ambassadors in the 98 Danish municipalities. This is one aspect of efforts to chart the need for research and education – and to spread the latest international knowledge to the municipal nursing homes, where many of the patients are,” explains Professor Gunhild Waldemar. She continues:

“We’re also looking at intercultural aspects of dementia assessment. In Denmark, the large ethnic minorities who came in the 1970s have now reached an age where some are developing dementia, and we need other tools for diagnosing them. This is partly because the tools we normally use are mainly language-based, making them inadequate in the case of patients who are not proficient enough in Danish. At the Danish Dementia Research Centre, we’re the standard bearers for European cooperation in this area, which involves a number of exciting aspects.”

### Focus on early diagnosis

The researchers at the centre work in very different projects. For example, they are also involved in a population study in Lebanon to diagnose how many people are suffering from dementia. This is the first study of its kind in this part of the world and in the long term will teach doctors a great deal about the disease, which is generally well-documented – but not in that part of the world.

“Finally, we’re also engaged in a series of genetic projects which could open up new avenues for early diagnosis and treatment. We have a significant international collaboration with 23 centres in Europe in the programme Joint Programming on Neurodegenerative Disorders to identify biomarkers, which will hopefully enable us to diagnose diseases such as dementia at a much earlier stage than today.”

### Danish Dementia Research Centre at a glance

With a staff of 60, approximately 2,000 patients and 1,000 new referrals per year, the Danish Dementia Research Centre is the largest clinic in Denmark for neurodegenerative diseases and dementia. Situated at Rigshospitalet, University of Copenhagen, the centre plays an important role in dissemination, for example by organising Dementia Days and other conferences and courses which attracts 3,600 participants and experts every year. The centre is also responsible for an e-learning programme called ABC Dementia, as well as issuing a newsletter and a dementia app. Researchers at the Danish Dementia Research Centre publish about 30-50 papers a year.



Professor Gunhild Waldemar, The Danish Dementia Research Centre, Rigshospitalet

## Facts about Global Excellence – in Health

The Global Excellence programme seeks to recognise and highlight the leading research and therapy environments in the field of healthcare in the hospitals and universities of the Capital Region of Denmark. The programme was established in 2010 in close cooperation with the University of Copenhagen and The Technical University of Denmark (DTU). The purpose of this initiative is to encourage internationalisation of the Region's excellent research and therapy environments with a view to attracting international partners, researchers, talents and both private-sector and public funding for research. The programme comprises the awarding of one or two prizes each year, followed up with focused support in the form of consultancy, tools, website development, conferences, etc.

The Global Excellence award is given to the hospital and university environments in the region that perform first-rate international level research leading to the development and implementation of new, pioneering healthcare services, treatment methods and products for the benefit of patients. The selected Global Excellence environments have been chosen by the executive committee of the Capital Region of Denmark on the basis of evaluations by a specialist review committee of national as well as international experts. The awardees are characterized by unique efforts within one or more areas such as: The extent and quality of their research and development, teaching, examination and treatment of patients, and innovation and dissemination of the new knowledge. In addition to the Global Excellence distinction, which is valid for a period of five years, the awardees each receive a grant of EUR 200,000 to help strengthen and further their international profile.



## Facts about the Capital Region of Denmark

The Capital Region of Denmark is one of five regional administrative units in Denmark. The Capital Region of Denmark, provides healthcare, mental healthcare, carries out research and regional development for 1.7 mio. people or approx. 30% of the population in Denmark. In addition to hosting the largest health care system in Denmark, the region is also home to one of the world's strongest life science clusters, and 70% of Denmark's biotech companies are located in the area.

The Capital Region is home to a number of specialist environments at the nine university hospitals in the region that perform world-class health research and have the ability to translate this new, innovative knowledge into pioneering health care services and treatment of the highest international standard. In order to highlight and acknowledge these environments, in 2010 – 2013 the Global Excellence – in Health award has been presented to a total of 22 hospital and university environments.

Denmark is in fourth place among the OECD countries regarding scientific publications per inhabitant and similarly in third place regarding citations. Accordingly health research in the Capital Region ranks among the best in Europe. In close collaboration with the University of Copenhagen, The Technological University of Denmark, the Capital Region of Denmark represents frontline health science and clinical research, together with research of high quality in other areas with relevans for development of future healthcare. Health research is carried out for approx. EUR 185,000,000 annually at the university hospitals in the region (including internal as well as external funds).

Sources: OECD Territorial Reviews: Copenhagen, Denmark (OECD, 2009); Research Barometer 2012 (Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation, 2012)

