



Danish Diabetes and Endocrine Academy Annual Report 2023

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**Danish Diabetes and
Endocrine Academy**

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Executive summary

For the year 2023, we wish to highlight the following:

- DDEA organisation was established. This included setting up a new Board of Directors (n=7), a new Committee for Education (n=12), a new Advisory Board (n=10), a new Grant Review Committee (n=115) and a new Secretariat (n=9).
- DDEA organised 25 educational activities - PhD and postdoctoral courses, symposia and webinars - across the diabetes and classical endocrine research field, which attracted around 1200 participants from universities, university hospitals and the life science industry in Denmark and abroad and received high participant satisfaction rates.
- DDEA organised nine networking and collaboration activities, across the diabetes and classical endocrine research field, which attracted participants from universities, university hospitals and the life science industry in Denmark and abroad and received high participant satisfaction rates.
- DDEA allocated in total 14 PhD scholarships, 14 postdoctoral fellowships and five visiting researchers grants.
- DDEA collaborated with Danish Cardiovascular Academy (DCA), Danish Data Science Academy (DDSA), and Neuroscience Academy (NAD) on various educational and networking activities.
- DDEA released five podcast episodes in the “Postdoc Talking: From Science to Society” series.
- DDEA reached 5,262 followers on LinkedIn and increased its follower count on X and Instagram by 24% as compared with 2022.
- DDEA met its measurable success criteria

Tore Christiansen

Managing Director

Strategy and governance

Mission

DDEA's mission is to foster early-career research talent through education and talent development, networking and collaboration, and funding in the field of diabetes and classical endocrinology.

Strategy

In collaboration with academia, hospitals, the life science industry, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), DDEA strives to provide research education and talent development opportunities for early-career researchers specializing in diabetes and classical endocrinology. Furthermore, DDEA is committed to promoting networking and collaborations across various research fields, sectors, and borders. This is achieved by unifying efforts from academia, hospitals, and the life science industry. The DDEA also aims to fund talented early-career researchers and visiting professors through open and competitive processes, thereby augmenting the pool of world-class research talent in the fields of diabetes and classical endocrinology.

DDEA operates using a 'bottom-up' approach, where robust and close collaboration between DDEA, national and international universities, university hospitals, the life science industry, and NGOs is essential for the development of our educational and talent development activities.

In relation to our initiatives in education, talent development, networking, and collaboration, DDEA has focused on four strategic themes: digitalization and new technologies; public involvement and outreach; strategic partnerships; and translational research.

For the DDEA Secretariat and the DDEA Committee for Education, it has been important to underscore that DDEA is a new Academy that is highly relevant to both the classical endocrine and diabetes communities, particularly in terms of our educational and networking programmes.

Organisation

In 2023, DDEA focused on establishing a new organisational structure and governance model, reflecting its evolution as an academy primarily serving early-career researchers in the fields of diabetes and classical endocrinology. To this end, we informed all relevant research institutions at universities, university hospitals, and within the life science industry in Denmark, as well as professional scientific societies, interest groups, and NGOs, about DDEA's initiative to recruit candidates for its new bodies.

The following committees and bodies have been successfully instituted:

1. The DDEA Board of Directors (seven members), which is responsible for defining and determining the overarching strategy of DDEA.

2. The DDEA Committee for Education (12 members), tasked with developing an annual programme encompassing DDEA's educational initiatives, talent development, and fostering networking and collaborative efforts.
3. The DDEA Advisory Board, comprising five national and five international members, is charged with critically evaluating DDEA's strategic approach across its four key activity areas (education, networking, grants, and communication), offering feedback, and advising the Board of Directors on potential revisions.
4. The DDEA Grant Review Committee, consisting of 100-150 members, conducts professional peer review assessments of applications for PhD scholarships, postdoctoral fellowships, and visiting researchers.
5. The DDEA Secretariat (nine members, including full-time, part-time, and student helpers), is entrusted with implementing the DDEA's strategies and activities

We have also established close relationships with the Danish Society for Endocrinology and the Danish Association of Young Endocrinologists. This collaboration ensures active involvement from the newly integrated field of classical endocrinology in the Academy's four key activity areas. Moreover, we have forged strong partnerships with the Danish Cardiovascular Academy (DCA) and the Danish Data Science Academy (DDSA) to co-organize relevant educational and networking events, as well as joint calls for cross-academy PhD scholarship grants.

Budget and accounts

In 2023, the grant budget totalled TDKK 31,479. The DDEA reported a surplus of T.DKK 3.98, primarily attributed to underspending in education and talent development activities and networking and collaboration activities, amounting to T.DKK 1,255. Additionally, grant activities saw a surplus of T.DKK 2,335 due to the non-distribution of two industrial postdoc grants, a cross-academy PhD scholarship, and reduced expenses in the visiting researcher grant programme compared to projections. Furthermore, operating expenses were lower by T.DKK 0.6, mainly stemming from decreased meeting expenses for the secretariat, boards, and committees, as well as reduced costs associated with the setup of the new website.

Educational activities and talent development

In 2023, DDEA successfully conducted a range of educational and networking events, collaborating with national and international experts from universities, university hospitals, the life science industry, and NGOs. The year's agenda included seven PhD courses, six postdoctoral courses, six symposia, and six webinars (see list in Appendix A). Notably, two PhD courses were organised in partnership with DCA and DDSA.

These activities collectively attracted approximately 1200 participants from diverse sectors, both domestically and internationally. The events were highly appreciated, achieving an average satisfaction score of 4.42 out of 5 for scientific content. Where relevant, DDEA incorporated one or more of the four strategic themes: Digitalization and new technologies, Public involvement and outreach, Strategic partnerships, Translational research into the education and networking activities. For example, people with lived experiences were invited to share their stories with early-career researchers during PhD courses, explaining what it is like to live with diabetes or an endocrine disorder.

Furthermore, a joint PhD course on data visualization, organized with DCA and DDSA, notably enhanced participants' skills in conveying research findings through effective visual representations. This course offered a deep dive into both the theoretical concepts and practical techniques necessary for transforming complex data into clear and insightful visual narratives.

Our 2023 programme for early-career researchers in diabetes and classical endocrinology covered a wide range of topics. These included bridging endocrinology with metabolism, data visualization, biomarkers in clinical endocrinology, diabetes technology, basic cardio-metabolism, methods, and transferable skills. The DDEA Summer School for PhD Students and the DDEA Postdoc Summit were flagship events of the year.

For the broader research community, we hosted symposia on various cutting-edge topics like rare endocrine diseases, adipose tissue and fat metabolism, clinical metabolic physiology, and the interplay between circadian rhythms and metabolic stress.

Networking and collaboration activities

In 2023, DDEA orchestrated nine key networking and collaboration initiatives, uniting national and international experts from diverse domains, including universities, university hospitals, the life science industry, and NGOs.

These initiatives included four specialised workshops focusing on topics like neuropathy, enhancing communication skills through storytelling for scientists, and fostering user involvement in DDEA's educational, networking, and grant activities. Additionally, five networking events were held, marking our presence at significant platforms such as the Danish Endocrine Society's Annual Meeting, the People's Meeting at Bornholm, the 25th European Congress of Endocrinology in Istanbul, and the 59th European Association of the Study of Diabetes annual meeting in Hamburg. A list of activities is available in Appendix A.

The workshops received excellent feedback, with an average satisfaction score of 4.40 out of 5 for scientific content. These events attracted approximately 77 participants from various sectors and countries, as well as from communities beyond the immediate research sphere.

2023 also marked a strategic shift towards emphasizing public involvement and societal outreach in our network and workshop activities

To increase the quality, relevance, and value of public and user involvement (PUI) in DDEA activities, we invited 30 researchers, end users, and NGOs to participate in the workshop '[Public and User Involvement in DDEA Activities: Education, Networking, Communication & Grants – Why, How, and When](#)'. The workshop's objective was to develop an inspiration catalogue with ideas on how to integrate PUI into DDEA's activities: Education and networking events, grants and communication.

In relation to its international collaboration and network, DDEA was by invited by researchers from University of Galway, Ireland to be part of an application to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, doctoral application on Diabetic Foot Disease, from prevention to treatment to improved patient in collaboration with. The role of DDEA as an associate partner if the application is granted is to offering a range of its education and networking activities to the early-career researchers involved in the programme.

Grant activities

The DDEA fellowship programme in diabetes and classical endocrinology covers three grant schemes: PhD scholarships; postdoctoral fellowships; and visiting researcher grants. All applications for the three grant schemes undergo an external international review by the DDEA Grant Review Committee, which constitutes a pool of reviewers and consists of a number of internationally renowned and dedicated scientific experts of the highest international calibre within diabetes, metabolism and classical endocrinology.

In total, 33 national and international early-career researchers and visiting researchers with educational backgrounds as Master of Science or medical doctors were granted in 2023 (see list of grant recipients in Appendix B).

The 14 PhD scholarships (seven 2/3-financed PhD scholarships, 3 1/3-financed with co-funding from DCA; and 4 1/3-financed with co-funding from the life science industry) were allocated to applicants within research of diabetes, pituitary and adrenal gland diseases, calcium metabolism bone and obesity and nutrition.

As a new initiative, DDEA and DCA granted three 2/3-financed DDEA-DCA Cross-Academy PhD scholarships with the purpose to strengthen the collaboration between cardiovascular research and research within diabetes, metabolism and classical endocrinology in Denmark.

The 14 postdoctoral fellowships (7 2-year fellowships; 2 2-year fellowships with co-funding from life science industry and 5 2-year 20%-financed clinical postdoctoral fellowships) were allocated to applicants within research of diabetes, gonadal diseases, calcium metabolism bone research, obesity and skeletal muscle physiology. As a new initiative, we specifically addressed clinical research for postdocs by offering five clinical 2-year part-time postdoctoral grants.

Where the competitions for the 2/3-financed scholarships and for the 2-year postdoctoral fellowships were high with a success ratio around 7% and 11%, respectively, we received too few applications for our industrial PhD scholarships and postdoctoral fellowship programmes.

The five visiting researcher grants were allocated to applicants from Australia (three), USA (one) and Ireland (one) within research of diabetes and metabolism.

Communications

In 2023, we launched our revamped website at www.ddeacademy.dk, offering a more intuitive and user-friendly experience. Our commitment to keeping our target group informed and engaged was conducted through our monthly newsletters, and we actively engaged with our community through weekly updates on LinkedIn, X and Instagram.

The number of followers on LinkedIn (5,262 as of 31.12.2023), X (2,262 as of 31.12.2023) and Instagram (779 as of 31.12.2023) increased by 23.2%, 18.4% and 24.6%, respectively, compared to 2022.

In 2023, DDEA released five podcast episodes in two different series of the DDEA podcast 'Postdocs Talking: From science to Society' with episodes on e.g. "AI is Not Sci-Fi: The Potential of Artificial Intelligence in Drug Discovery"; "More Talk, More Action: Causes and Treatment of Erectile Dysfunction" and "Should We Be Rethinking the Scientific Publication". In total, the two podcast series were downloaded more than 1,000 times in 2023.

Scientific publications, collaborations, dissemination and further funding

As the first DDEA-funded researchers only began their projects in the fall of 2023, they have not reported any research activities of relevance in Researchfish, which collects data on e.g. scientific publications, collaborations, dissemination, and further funding. Data on DDA-funded researchers who have reported in Researchfish in 2023 shows the following:

Scientific publications

DDA-funded researchers reported 73 unique publications attributed to their DDA grants (predominantly in peer-reviewed journals).

Collaborations

The number of new unique collaborations across sectors and disciplines established by DDA and DDA-funded researchers in 2023 was 18.

Dissemination activities

The number of dissemination activities reported by the DDA or DDA-funded researchers in 2023 was 68. The majority of the disseminations were talks at national and international workshops and conferences, podcast and press releases.

Further funding

In 2023, DDA-funded researchers reported additional funding of 10.1 million DKK.

Evaluation of success criteria

Some of the success criteria set for DDEA in terms of education, networking, grants, and communication can only be meaningfully evaluated after DDEA has been in existence for a couple of years - and some not until after the current grant period (2023-2027). Therefore, the success criteria described below are not fully comprehensive of what is outlined in the application to the Novo Nordisk Foundation.

Educational and talent development

- **Number of educational and talent development activities:** Successfully met the success criteria by organizing a total of 25 PhD courses, postdoc courses, symposia, and webinars, surpassing the goal of 15.
- **Educational offerings to endocrinology fields outside of diabetes:** Achieved the objective of allocating 25% of the 2023 educational offerings to endocrinology fields outside of diabetes. However, the relevance of this criterion is currently under review, considering the integrated nature of diabetes-endocrine programmes. Most of the scientific courses now incorporate themes that cover both diabetes and classical endocrinology.
- **Participant Satisfaction:** Successfully met the success criteria related to participant satisfaction with the scientific programmes.

Networking and collaboration

- **Workshops and Networking Achievements:** Successfully exceeded our success criteria by organizing a total of nine workshops and networking activities, surpassing our initial goal of eight.
- **Cross-Academy Activities:** Achieved our success criteria through collaborative efforts on two PhD courses with DCA and DDSA, meeting our target of two.
- **Industry and International Collaboration:** Fulfilled our criteria by engaging in numerous activities with partners in the life-science industry, NGOs, and research institutions abroad, achieving our objective of two key collaborations.
- **Participant Satisfaction:** Successfully met the success criteria related to participant satisfaction with the scientific programmes

4. Grants

- **Grant Distribution Highlights:** Within the DDEA fellowship programme in diabetes and classical endocrinology, which covers three grant schemes: PhD scholarships; postdoctoral fellowships, and visiting researcher grants - we have achieved our success criterion of distributing 25% of the grants in an open and free competition to other endocrinology fields than diabetes. However we are facing a challenge with an overall lower number of applications from the classical endocrinology for the DDEA fellowship programme. Moving forward, a crucial objective for our programme is therefore to stimulate and increase application submissions from the classical endocrine community. This effort is essential to meet our success criteria in relation to grant distribution for 2024 and beyond.
- **Publications from DDA and DDEA-Funded researchers:** A bibliometric analysis conducted in January 2024 on DDA-funded researchers (2013-2021) and DDEA-funded researchers (2023) on their research from 2013-2023 showed that DDA- and DDEA-funded researchers authored 2,876 unique publications.
- **Achievement in Top Tier Journal Presence:** 50% of the publications appeared in the top 10% of journals most cited in diabetes research, meeting the target goal of 50%.
- **Global Journal Ranking Success:** 24% of the publications were featured in journals globally ranked in the top 10% for citations, surpassing the target goal of 20%.
- **Top 1% Publication Presence:** 2.6% of the publications ranked in the global top 1%, slightly below our target of 3%.

5. Communication and Outreach

- **Collaboration with NGOs:** Successfully collaborated with NGOs in 2023.
- **Digital Outreach:** Successfully achieved that over 30% of DDEA activities within education and talent development and networking and collaboration were presented online and/or resulted in digital output.

Future focus

DDEA's Strategic Initiative for Addressing Principal Risks and Challenges

During the June 2023 DDEA Board of Directors seminar, the Board of Directors identified four principal risks and challenges critical to the organisation's future. In response, DDEA has strategically established four specialised Board Committees. These committees are integral to the organisation's proactive approach in addressing these challenges and realizing its full potential.

- **Board Committee on Sustainability of DDEA:** This committee is focused on ensuring the long-term sustainability of DDEA, extending beyond the current five-year project timeline.
- **Board Committee on Integration of Classical Endocrinology:** This group is dedicated to incorporating classical endocrinology within DDEA's framework.
- **Board Committee on Collaboration with the Life-Science Industry:** This committee advises on strategies for fruitful collaborations with the life-science sector, enhancing DDEA's impact and reach.
- **Board Committee on Strategic Partnerships:** This committee's goal is to enhance DDEA's collaborative efforts, ensuring that international partnerships are leveraged effectively for mutual benefit.

Each committee is tasked with two primary objectives: to provide innovative strategies and inputs for the augmentation of DDEA's potential and to support the Board of Directors in strategic decision-making through comprehensive analysis and recommendations.

The committees' proposals and recommendations will be presented for review at Board of Directors meetings in June and September 2024.