

# Strategy for clinical health science research

2023 – 2027

# Together we take research to the highest level to improve life and health for all people

Clinical health science research is a core task at both Health, Aarhus University in general and in particular at Department of Clinical Medicine, and at Aarhus University Hospital.

The Central Denmark Region strategy for health from 2019 describes that research is performed at all regional hospitals in a close collaboration with Aarhus University, Health. Aarhus University Hospital is the beacon in clinical research in Central Denmark Region and thus has a special responsibility for health science research in collaboration with Health.

In accordance with the strategic ambition at Aarhus University Hospital to be a highly specialized hospital at the highest international level, Aarhus University in collaboration with Aarhus University Hospital conducts research at the highest level across traditional boundaries, professions and specialities with involvement of and to the benefit of patients.

We are driven by a mutual motivation to create breakthroughs in prevention, diagnostics, and treatment offered to patients. Clinical health science researchers contribute to the research-based health science and medical education programmes offered to the next generation of health professionals. Research is pivotal to develop and maintain

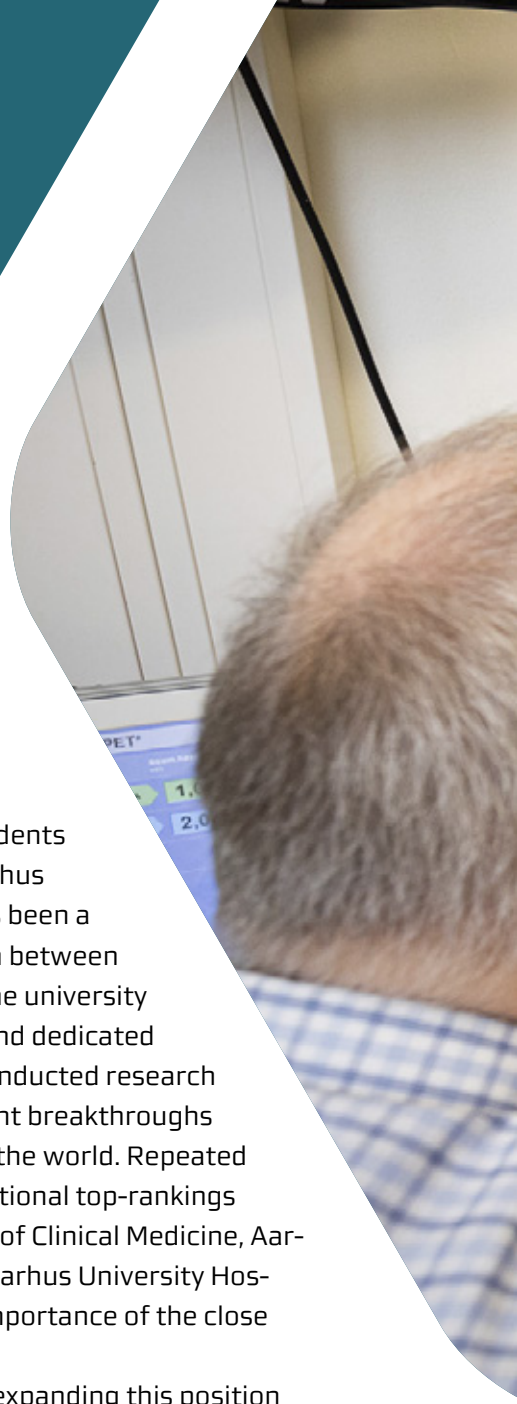
the highest international level in clinical practice.

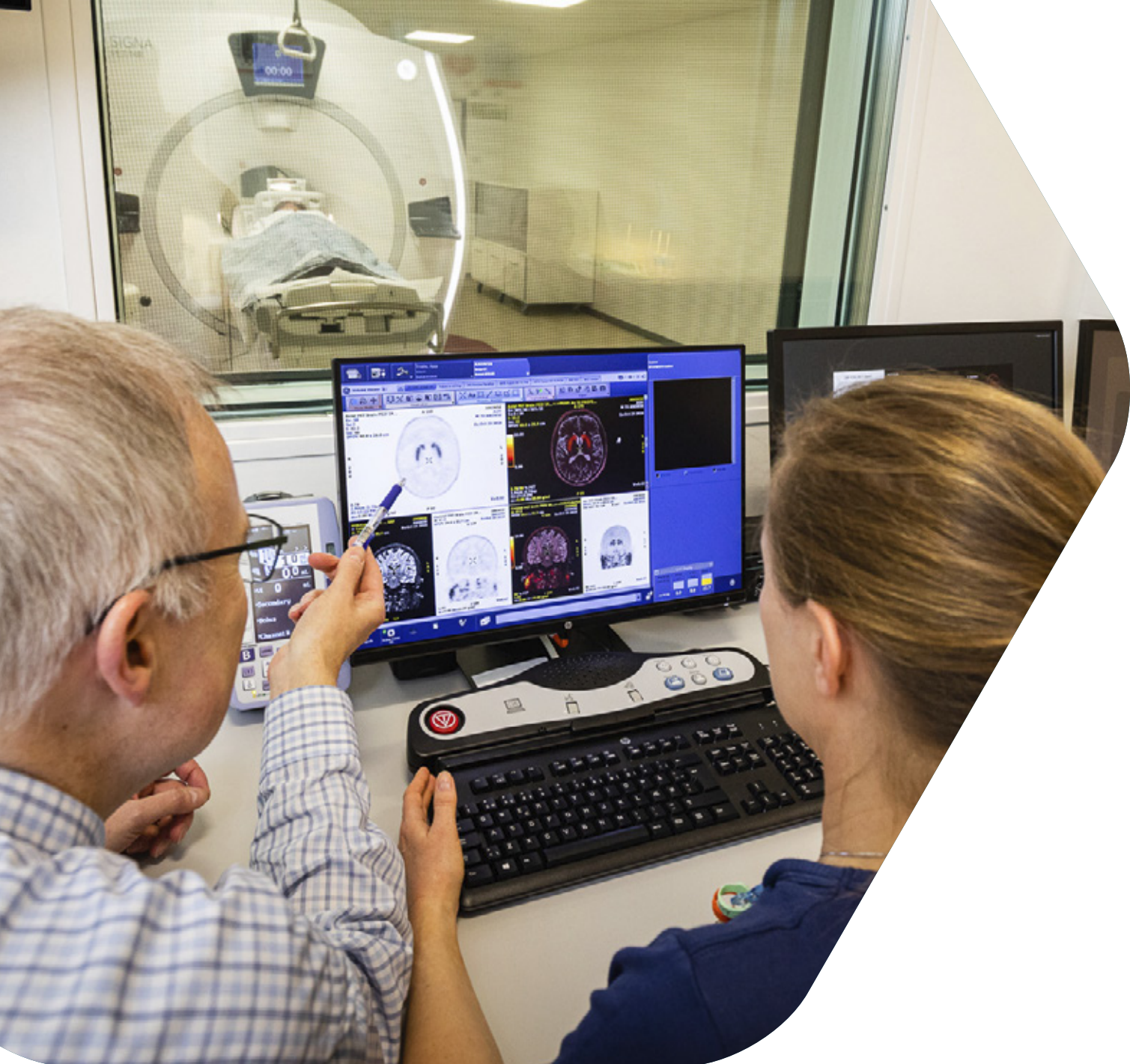
Since 1933, when the first medical students were enrolled at Aarhus University, there has been a unique collaboration between the university and the university hospital. Excellent and dedicated researchers have conducted research resulting in treatment breakthroughs for patients all over the world. Repeated national and international top-rankings of both Department of Clinical Medicine, Aarhus University and Aarhus University Hospital testify to the importance of the close collaboration.

Maintaining and expanding this position require a constant strive to strengthen the foundation for research at international level and to improve conditions for a flourishing and innovative research environment allowing talented researchers to prosper and develop.

This strategy shows the way to achieve our ambitions.

We succeed through our joint ambition, collaboration, generosity and creativity.





*Anne-Mette Hvas, Dean, Health,  
Aarhus University*

*Jørgen Frøkiær, Head of Department,  
Department of Clinical Medicine, Health,  
Aarhus University*

*Ellen Margrethe Hauge, Deputy Head of de-  
partment for research, Department of  
Clinical Medicine, Health, Aarhus University*

*Susanne Lauth, Chief Nursing Officer, Aarhus  
University Hospital*

*Michael Braüner Schmidt, Chief Medical  
Officer, Aarhus University Hospital*

*Claus Thomsen, Chief Medical Officer,  
Aarhus University Hospital*

*Poul Blaabjerg, Chief Executive Officer,  
Aarhus University Hospital*

# Strategic foundation

This strategy is the result of a process involving representatives from department managements at Aarhus University Hospital, clinical chairs, professors, associate professors, and junior researchers, department managements at Health, members of the Research Councils at Department of Clinical Medicine and Aarhus University Hospital, collaborators from the regional hospitals in Central Denmark Region as well as other stakeholders who have participated in questionnaire surveys, seminars and meetings. Faculty departments and hospital departments play a decisive role in disseminating and implementing the strategy.

## Reading guide

Mission, vision and values are formulated by the department management at Department of Clinical Medicine and the Hospital Management at Aarhus University Hospital. The department managements at Department of Biomedicine and Department of Public Health have also contributed.

The strategy has four tracks covering the main themes of importance to realise the vision:

- » Together we create and lead national and international research projects
- » Together we expand an excellent research environment across professions and specialities
- » Together we conduct research with and for all patients
- » Together we create the best possibilities for development for all talented researchers

Each track consists of actions and objectives. Each action does not have a specific objective because not all actions can be measured. However, each action, regardless of the objective, must lead to changed behaviours and concrete results.

In the implementation of the strategy, the prioritization concerning time may be changed if this is considered necessary.

Mission, vision, values and tracks are summarised later.

## Mission

Together we produce new knowledge on health and disease processes through health science research in prevention, diagnostics and treatment to the benefit of the population in Denmark and the rest of the world.

## Vision

Together we take research to the highest level to improve the life and health of all people.

- » We create breakthroughs for each individual patient
- » We strengthen the foundation for international and excellent research
- » We strengthen conditions for a flourishing and innovative research environment
- » We offer the best opportunities for development for talented researchers

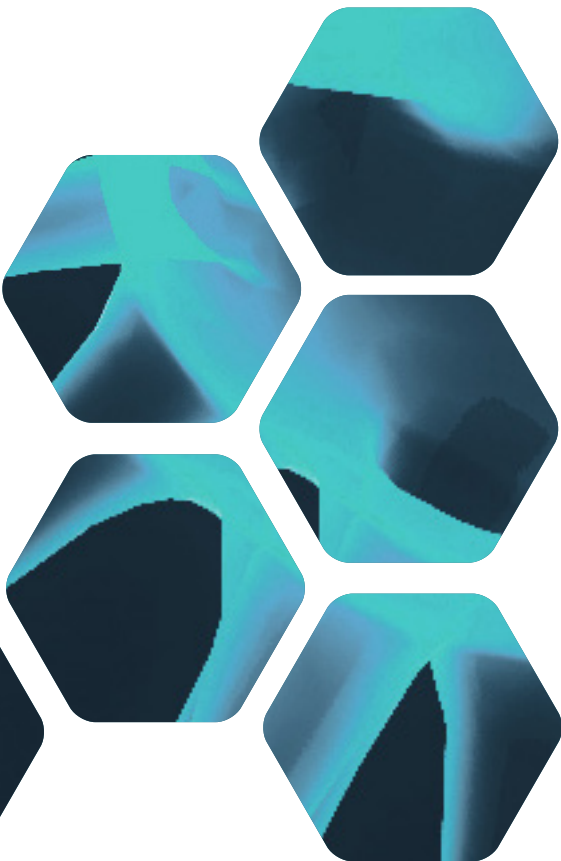
## Values

**Ambition** We are passionate researchers striving to perform excellent research creating breakthroughs to the benefit of patients and society

**Collaboration** We include collaborators across professions, sectors and organisations

**Generosity** We are accommodating experts who do something extraordinary to help others

**Creativity** We are experimental knowledge staff doing our utmost to find solutions to complex challenges



# Tracks

## **Together we create and lead national and international research projects**

Research is a core task, and our vision is to create breakthroughs for the individual patient through excellent research at high international level. We aim to initiate and lead international research projects. To do this, research leaders must have special competencies, networks and outlook and be able to promote research projects and results.

## **Together we expand an excellent research environment across professions and areas of specialization**

We include collaborators across professions and sectors. In our effort to create solutions to complex challenges, we need to interact innovatively with other knowledge staff. This collaboration can contribute with new angles to joint research projects including the development of highly specialized functions.

## **Together we conduct research with and for all patients**

Research must include all population groups and involve patients. Our research must benefit patients regardless of socioeconomic status, age, ethnicity and gender. Thus, as many types of patients as possible should be involved in research projects. Patients must experience that our research is relevant and should be included in the formulation of research questions, patient information etc.

## **Together we create the best opportunities for development for all talented researchers**

To create excellent research with breakthroughs benefitting each individual patient, we must give talented researchers the best conditions for further development, be able to attract external, highly qualified researchers and retain the skilled and competent researchers we already have. To promote diversity, inclusion and transparency in research environments, we include and involve all talents and create better conditions for an innovative and flourishing research environment.

# Tracks, actions and objectives

## Together we create and lead national and international research projects

Research is a core task. Our vision is to create breakthroughs for each patient through excellent research at high international level. We must be able to initiate and lead international research projects. To do this, research leaders must have special competencies, network and outlook and be able to promote research projects and results.

## Research management

### Actions

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We acknowledge that research management is demanding, and it requires competencies and leadership development.

We offer courses in research management aligned with other offers for competence development for researchers.

We identify future research leaders and ensure research leadership development in all departments.

We wish that department managements can gain adequate insight in research management to strengthen research as a core task.

We put research on the agenda in discussions between department managements, the Hospital Management and the management of Department of Clinical Medicine in recurring meetings and dialogues about research.

### Objectives

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At least 80% of all professors will complete a research management programme before the end of 2027.

All department managements at Aarhus University Hospital are offered targeted research management programmes before the end of 2023.

## Collaboration

### Actions

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We stimulate increased national and international collaboration in all aspects of clinical research.

We more often host international symposia, congresses, conferences and similar events.

### Objectives

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At the research dialogue meetings in 2023, agreements are made with each department on the extent of research publications made in collaboration with researchers internationally and/or researchers from other Danish institutions before the end of this strategy period.

75% of all publications are published in the top 25% of journals relevant to the research field.

## Promotion and visibility

### Actions

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We invest in building relations with foundations, authorities etc.

### Objectives

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We make a joint action plan to coordinate relationship building concerning funding before the end of 2024.

We increase the proportion of external funding by 20% in 2027 compared with 2021.

Obtained funds above DKK 5 million is increased by 10% in 2027 compared with 2021.

The following five development areas will all have obtained funding amounting to at least DKK 10 million at the end of the strategy period: Children and adolescents, transplantation, precision medicine, infectious diseases and the highly specialized hospital covering all cancer pathways.

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We make clinical research more visible – internally and externally.

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In 2023, we make a SoMe strategy for common branding of clinical research.





## Together we expand an excellent research environment across professions and areas of specialization

We include collaborators across professions and sectors. In our effort to create solutions to complex challenges, we need to interact innovatively with other knowledge staff. This collaboration can contribute with new angles to joint research projects including the development of highly specialized functions.

### Actions

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We stimulate synergies between basic, clinical and health services research.

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We encourage research activities across professions, areas of specialization, faculties and sectors. Across sectors is also understood as research in integrated care pathways and research collaboration with the life science industry.

We support interdisciplinary networks (at the drafting of the strategy, the following networks were established: Network for translational cancer research, The cardiovascular network, Network for food and nutrition, Network for personalised medicine and Neurocampus Aarhus).

We are involved in the partnership Human First, a collaboration on ground-breaking research, development, education and clinical practice – for better health and a better society.

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We develop partnerships between research environments to provide competent support to ensure growth of less established research environments.

### Objectives

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At two annual seminars, we strengthen dialogue and coordination between research councils across departments and hospital. The purpose is to discuss initiatives to strengthen the synergy between basic, clinical and health services research.

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We increase the number of publications based on interprofessional research collaboration by 10% during the strategy period.

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Establishment of a partnership arrangement (at team/department level) between larger and smaller research environments. A trial action for this arrangement will be initiated in 2023 on the requests from researchers in less established research environments. The trial action is evaluated during the spring of 2024.

## Actions

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We make it possible for researchers to interact and discuss with colleagues across departments who have been successful in achieving larger fundings.

We expand international networks by attracting visiting professors and other international researchers.

We focus specifically on international collaborations in highly specialized areas with a very low patient volume.

We ensure coordination and close collaboration between units at Aarhus University Hospital and Aarhus University working with health innovation.

We are part of Health Innovation Aarhus (HIA). The purpose of HIA is to attract investments, international businesses, start-ups, students, researchers, developers and other professions and talents to the Aarhus area.

## Objectives

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An overview is made of recipients of larger fundings (above DKK 5 million) in the previous 4 years. The overview is available before the end of 2023.

We increase the number of international visiting professors including the Honorary Skou professorships at Health by 50% during the strategy period (appointments for new Honorary Skou professorships every second year – 2024-2026)

We increase participation in international networks e.g., Circle-U (European University Alliance), European Reference Network, European Hospital Alliance, COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology), The Guild etc.



## Together we conduct research with and for all patients

Research must include all population groups and involve patients. Our research must benefit patients regardless of socioeconomic status, age, ethnicity and gender. Thus, as many types of patients as possible should be involved in research projects. Patients must experience that our research is relevant and should be included in the formulation of research questions, patient information etc.



## Inclusion of patients in research

### Actions

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We aim for a broader inclusion into research projects to offer patients from all population groups, particularly complex patients and patients with multimorbidity, the possibility to participate in research projects.

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We increase patients' participation in research projects by targeted use of several different communication channels.

### Objectives

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Before the end of 2023, all researchers are introduced to how we can make a broader inclusion with the overall purpose to ensure inclusion of all types of patients in research projects.

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All relevant patients are offered to be part of at least one clinical research project. Before the end of 2024, all clinical departments make an action plan on how the local research environments can include more patients and/or broader inclusion of patients in research projects. The effects of the action plans are evaluated at the research dialogue meeting during the course of 2027.



## Patients as partners in the research process

### Actions

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We offer specific and relevant advice on patient involvement in research projects to all researchers – including how to formulate research questions.

Our research protocols describe how patients are involved as partners in the research process and the expected effects of this for the research the patients are part of.

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We make it possible for patients to make suggestions for research questions e.g., by establishing patient panels divided e.g., into diagnosis and no diagnosis and through websites/social media.

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We report main findings to the patients who have been involved in the research projects.

### Objectives

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In 2023, we make an education programme for all researchers on patient involvement in research projects, including advice to researchers on how patients obtain the best conditions for being partners in research processes.

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In 2024-25, a digital platform will be established where patients and relatives can contribute to research questions.

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In 2024, digital forms have been developed, which can be used to report main findings to patients.

## Together we create the best opportunities for development for all talented researchers

To create excellent research with breakthroughs benefitting each individual patient, we must give talented researchers the best conditions for further development, be able to attract external, highly qualified researchers and retain the skilled and competent researchers we already have. To promote diversity, inclusion and transparency in research environments, we include and involve all talents and create better conditions for an innovative and flourishing research environment.

### Actions

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We make the university hospital's investments in research visible by making statements of the annual consumption for research at Aarhus University Hospital.

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More clinical research positions in all professions are established.

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We work continuously to create an attractive research and working environment with focus on thriving and work-life balance.

We make it possible for talented and excellent researchers to do lifelong research from pre-graduate to senior researcher level.

### Objectives

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In 2027, at least 5% of the payroll budget at Aarhus University Hospital is spent on research.

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We strive to offer at least three associate professorships annually and at least three professorships during the strategy period among qualified researchers with a health professional background.

We establish several postdoc positions by the end of 2024.

In the first half of 2023, we decide a level for the financing of professorships which departments are expected to contribute with.

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Before the end of 2025, we make an action plan to ensure we retain talented and excellent researchers.

## Actions

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Aarhus University Hospital offers mentorship to all new researchers as a follow-up on the onboarding programme at Department of Clinical Medicine and the general programme at Aarhus University.

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We make career pathways more transparent and thus accessible to all.

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We pool data to follow the development over time of the gender distribution among associate professors and professors with joint positions at Aarhus University Hospital and Aarhus University (based on existing data from Health).

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We revise recruiting processes concerning representation, language and criteria to ensure equal conditions for advancement (this applies to job advertisements, establishment of assessment committees, appointments committees and appointment interviews and criteria)

## Objectives

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A mentorship programme is developed for newly employed staff in research positions.

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In the second half of 2023, an overview of research positions from PhD to professor level will be made, including specifications for and financing of each level.

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Annual statistics are made on the current gender distribution.

No later than in the first half of 2024, gender distribution will be on the agenda at meetings in the Research Council at Aarhus University Hospital.

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In 2023, we establish a working group to review current knowledge in the field. The working group will draft a suggestion for revision of recruitment processes.

No later than the end of 2024, we have made a coordinated revision of the recruitment processes.

*Photos on page 2-3, 9, 11, 12, 13 Tonny Fogmar, AUH*

*Photos on page 13 AU Health*

*Photos on page: 1, 5, 7 Colorbox*

