

# Astrid Pernille Jespersen

*"I have always pursued collaborating with researchers from other disciplines that differ completely from my own. The learning scope and impact of cross disciplinary work is much higher for all parties involved."*

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Astrid Pernille Jespersen is an associate professor in Ethnology at the University of Copenhagen. Since the completion of her PhD on primary care medicine and consultation processes, she has worked extensively with health, lifestyle, obesity and ageing. She created the Copenhagen Centre for Health Research in the Humanities (CoRe), and simultaneously, a whole new area of research.

In the beginning of the 2010's many medical trials and general health studies were carried out by measuring only the physical aspects specifically related to the issues they were studying. A qualitative research looking into the general lifestyle, background and everyday life of patients and study objects was missing. This led Astrid to create the CoRe centre.

# Building a new research centre through strategic cross disciplinary collaborations

---

At CoRe, researchers collaborate intensively with people from the STEM area, along with private and public organizations. They conduct strategic research where outreach activities are always included in the development phase of new research projects.

They have developed new ethnological methods which combines the qualitative and quantitative. These methods have improved medical research designs and given them a more comprehensive view on results.

Besides from improving working procedures and methods in different areas of the healthcare system, Jespersen and her colleagues have created different valorisation products such as practical guidelines, training tools and communication material.

Jespersen was able to create the CoRe centre mainly due to the fact that she had received large amounts of funding. In this context, cross disciplinary collaboration has been key. Not only is the funding granted to the natural sciences in a significantly larger scale, but the learning scope and impact of collaboration with other disciplines is much higher for all parties involved.

Jespersen wants to 'demystify' research and teach younger colleagues that research work is a solid 'craftsmanship' with a built-in system in which you both need to be pragmatic and strategic. This contributes to a more systematic approach to research among students and younger researchers.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

## & ADVICE

**Outreach** (contact with stakeholders, interest groups and target market) **needs to come early in the process** – it is not a communication praxis that comes at the end of a project.

**Researchers should organize themselves in research groups.** Preferably with the help of experienced research support staff.

**Humanities researchers** need to enter the large decision-making boards, ministries, EU etc. early on – and take part in the creation of important questions.

**Strategic research** and **cross-disciplinary** collaborations are essential elements of getting funding.