

Purposeful career building in (pharmaco-)epidemiology

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DRUGS



”We need less research,
better research and
research done for
the right reasons”

- Altman



Meta-skills

Prioritization

Communication

Career transitions

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COMMENTARY

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Strategies to Enhance Satisfaction and Success in an Academic Career in Pharmacoepidemiology

Vincent Lo Re III^{1,2}  | Greta Bushnell^{1,3} | Luciane Cruz Lopes⁴  | Anton Pottegård⁵ 

Four foundations

Career benchmarks

Structural factors

Developing vision

Reflection time

Prioritization

Mentorship

Awareness

Conversation

Tools

Vision

I am a research leader and a researcher.

As a public health researcher and pharmacoepidemiologist, I am doing high-quality, transparent registry-based research that supports regulators and clinicians, ultimately to the benefit of patients worldwide.

I leverage my position and the data I can access to support data driven health care management.

I take pride in disseminating research, maintaining an active social media presence, and contributing to the public debate.

As a research leader, I always prioritize the research group and its members. I take pride in maintaining a first-class work environment and a workplace that embrace people in all situations in life. I strive to provide the best possible education to all members of the group, with an emphasis on meta skills and the growth of the individual member.

I am recognized as a passionate and highly active researcher, a valued collaborator and a supportive colleague – and I am known for prioritizing support to younger researchers. (2025; v5)

Reflection

Prioritization



Just say no: A young researcher's thoughts on prioritizing projects and ideas

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Anton Pottegård
Professor at University of Southern Denmark

3 articles

Most scientific papers end with “This calls for more research”! As such, there is always another idea and another potential project. And as a young researcher, I have been eager to pursue them all. However, at some point I started losing track of my projects. What was important? And what was simply ‘nice to’ projects? More importantly, the important stuff started to wither due to lack of attention. At the same time, my hair was greying at a rapid pace and the sleep deprivation was setting in. Does this sound familiar?

8 practical tools to assist you in saying NO!

By Anton Pottegård (@Pottegard)

Mydtskov criteria

Named after a Danish jazz musician. To accept a gig, you should require more than one of the following: 1) Great music (fun project), 2) Great pay (funding/citations), and 3) Great people. As an example, you could do a fun project with horrible pay if it were with wonderful people, but you shouldn't do a boring project with horrible pay, even if it is with these wonderful people.

The “72-hour” rule

Before accepting a project, consider putting it on quarantine for 72 hours. Nothing is ever that urgent. And if you're still enthusiastic 72 hours later, the idea might be worth pursuing. This tool is particularly important if you are feeling very excited about an idea (and thus do not think clearly).

Tickbox optimization

How many tickboxes can you tick if you do this? If the answer is one, you might be better off pursuing something that solves multiple problems in one go.

JOMO!

“Joy (not fear) Of Missing Out”. Once a project is turned down, set time aside to actively (!) ponder about how happy you are that you are not doing it. It builds confidence for future decisions.

Senior input

Sometimes listening to the “village elders” makes you wiser. Senior researchers never complain about having missed out. In fact, Ken Rothman was recently quoted for “I've never regretted saying no”. If such brilliant people do not regret it, it might be worth trying.

Vision?

Have you and your colleagues agreed on a visionary statement? Will this project move you closer to that vision? If not, you should probably turn it down.

“To do” comparison

Before accepting a new project, take a look at your current list of projects and the list of (other) new ideas. The new project might sound interesting, but is it more interesting/valuable than what you already have going on? It should be, if you choose to pursue it, as your other projects will inevitably suffer from the competition.

Constant reminder

We all know we need to become better at saving time for what's truly important to us. And many of us need to be reminded constantly. A picture of the kids on the desk (or even better on the lock screen of your smartphone!), perhaps even with them looking sternly at you, makes you remember.

Just say no!

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Just say no!

Mentorship

Four foundations
Career benchmarks
Structural factors

KEY SKILLS TO DEVELOP AND BENCHMARKS TO ACHIEVE AT STAGES OF AN ACADEMIC CAREER IN PHARMACOEPIDEMIOLOGY

NEW LEARNER / TRAINEE

SKILLS TO DEVELOP

- Core concepts in the field
- Metrics of success
- Taking feedback
- Time management
- Establish a network
- Teamwork, team-building
- Organization
- Oral presenting, communicating
- Abstract, manuscript writing

BENCHMARKS TO ACHIEVE

- Develop areas of interest
- Establish mentorship
- Develop aims for master's or doctoral thesis

LATE TRAINEE

SKILLS TO DEVELOP

- Advanced concepts in the field
- Networking
- Time management, scheduling
- Oral presenting, communicating
- Abstract, manuscript writing
- Research grant writing
- Project management
- Budgets

BENCHMARKS TO ACHIEVE

- Audit, update mentorship team
- Deepen knowledge in areas of interest
- Attend ISPE annual meeting
- Complete degree/training
- Interview for, obtain initial job

EARLY FACULTY (YEARS 1-6)

SKILLS TO DEVELOP

- Advanced concepts in the field
- Metrics of success
- Time management, scheduling
- Project management
- Budgets
- Teaching and mentorship
- How to say "no" effectively
- Networking

BENCHMARKS TO ACHIEVE

- Audit, update mentorship team
- Present at national/international conferences
- Become involved in an ISPE committee, SIG, council
- Meet success metrics

LATE FACULTY (YEARS ≥7)

SKILLS TO DEVELOP

- Teaching and mentorship
- Giving feedback
- Networking
- Continued education
- Leadership

BENCHMARKS TO ACHIEVE

- Update mentorship team
- Present at national/international conferences
- Assume local leadership roles
- Increase mentorship of trainees
- Assume leadership roles in an ISPE committee, SIG, council
- Meet success metrics

IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES TO PURSUE ACROSS ALL CAREER STAGES

- Maintain time for reflection (consider your values, vision, missions for each life role, short-term and long-term goals)
- Review professional and personal priorities (i.e., what matters most to you, your stakeholders, your organization) and alignment with your activities regularly
- Maintain regular meetings with mentors
- Maintain self-care (adequate sleep, regular exercise, proper nutrition)
- Pursue activities (e.g., hobbies) that promote joy, reduce stress, improve mental and physical health, and spark innovation

One thing next week?

Now that we have you...

Dear PhD student: Who's got your ear? – Your supervisor? Or the bricks in the walls?

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Anton Pottegård

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The 7 Habits of Highly
Effective People
(Stephen Covey)

Mastery
(Robert Greene)

What to Make of a Life
(Jim Collins)



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Thank you!

