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|  | **Let’s shed light on the mental health of PhD students***By Omeed Neghabat, Chair of PhD Association, Health, Dept. of Cardiology, Aarhus University Hospital and Dept. of Clinical Medicine, Aarhus University*Far too many PhD students from Aarhus University are experiencing severe stress symptoms. Many report feeling isolated and experiencing palpitations, stomachaches, depression, restlessness, and memory problems. More report feeling lonely in their working environment. Even more report that their work negatively affects their private lives. These are among the conclusions drawn from the recent Quality in the PhD Process 2021 survey that was performed earlier this year. Unfortunately, this is a repeating pattern from the past survey, which was performed in 2017, and it is a major area of concern.The quality of our PhD projects, the drive and integrity of our working ethics, and the passion of developing new knowledge within our research fields only go as far as our mental health and wellbeing can take us – and if our mental health and wellbeing suffers, it will inevitably have large consequences for us in our work as well as our private lives. For this reason, PhD students’ mental health has been a pivotal point of focus on the PhD Association Health’s agenda. We want to shed light on this matter going forward and actively engage with it from different perspectives. We are in a strong collaboration with the PhD Committee and the Graduate School of Health as well as associations across faculties and universities in sharing experiences and knowledge. The collective goal is to illuminate the everyday challenges with PhD students’ mental health issues.Specifically, we are presently working on creating weekly and monthly social events for PhD students from different departments and labs, where they can meet other PhD students on a common and informal ground, talk, and share ups and downs in their workday. Moreover, we are planning and helping to bring talks and lectures for our PhD students to attend that will accentuate the importance of a healthy mental working environment and the unsettling prevalence and consequences of facing stress and loneliness in the ever-tempered field of academia. Additionally, we will present an available list with an overview of different events taking place during the year on and outside campus that may be relevant for PhD students wanting to know where and how to connect with others. Finally, we wish to shorten the gap between students in need of guidance and helping hands already established at the university. Stay tuned for more information through our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/phdassociationAU](https://newsletter.au.dk/t/j-l-firkihk-jukdkdyuv-yd/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) or our Twitter: [@phdassoc\_health](https://newsletter.au.dk/t/j-l-firkihk-jukdkdyuv-yh/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).However, we realize that handling mental health issues is a long journey that requires involvement from all of us; students, supervisors, administrations, and everyone in between. This requires acknowledgement of the problem and active initiatives from the faculties, graduate schools and institutes of the university – and the PhD Association Health is ready to be a part of a fruitful dialogue to find long-term solutions. We need to purposely move towards environments in which our mental wellbeing is not seen as a taboo and can be discussed freely. Ask your nearest colleagues, office mates or lab partners about their day, laugh about a fun story over the morning coffee, or discuss a difficult situation or task during lunch. It is the little things that will make a big difference in the long run. As things currently stand, it is clear that cultural changes in the academic settings are needed.We in the PhD Association Health want to help PhD students in identifying and obtaining what they need in order to have a healthy working environment, so that we may tailor our strategies going forward. Therefore, keep us in the loop with what you are experiencing in your individual places of work. Share your ideas of healthy actions to be taken. Tell us about rough times, how you handled them or how you are still struggling with them. We can be reached through our e-mail: phdforeningen.health@au.dk or on our social media listed above. We are eager to connect with you, listen to your needs, offer advice, and guide you through your years as a PhD student.Let us all stay in touch and speak up about mental health issues. Given the results of the survey, we can assure you; you are definitely not alone. |