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- “Understand stakeholders’ needs and strategies – sometimes before they are aware of them themselves

Morten Elbæk Petersen is the CEO of the innovative Danish public health portal sundhed.dk. Launched in 2002 for citizens and health professionals and the largest patient portal in Europe, the site won Petersen the HIMSS Europe eHealth Leadership Award this year. Today, twenty per cent of the Danish population uses the portal every month and use is growing.

1. What are your key areas of interest and research?

One joint healthcare system with the patient in focus. I am driven by a desire to modernise and improve the healthcare system through healthcare IT, sharing of quality data and joint infrastructure. I am very interested in implementing eHealth in the public healthcare system to get the most out of a budget by cutting administrative obstacles, involving the patient and connecting the entire healthcare system across sectors, professions and cultures.

2. What are the major challenges in your field?

A culture of trust is essential for openly accessible medical records. Several recent studies and surveys show that Denmark is a very trusting nation and the population has a very high level of confidence in the public sector. However, a small group of healthcare professionals has recently set an agenda questioning the safety and transparency of personal healthcare data management. It's essential to protect and guard the culture of trust. Though we do welcome discussion and criticism, it's also a challenge.

3. What is your top management tip?

Understand stakeholders’ needs and strategies – sometimes before they are aware of them themselves.

4. What would you single out as a career highlight?

Starting and building up a successful national health portal for both citizens and healthcare professionals that makes a difference.

5. If you had not chosen this career path what do you think you would have become?

A researcher in the social sciences developing new methods in measuring health.

6. What are your personal interests outside of work?

Old French cars (Citroën DS), running and of course, my family and dogs.

7. Your favourite quote?

“Nobody says anything original - it’s always a quote”.

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