The Eklund Foundation for Odontological Research and Education was established to support high-quality research in the field of dentistry. It was launched with a donation of €5.5 million by the Eklund family, founders of the Swedish oral hygiene company TePe Munhygienprodukter. Key in reviewing the research projects and presenting the applications under consideration to the board is Dr Anna Nilvéus Olofsson, Manager of Odontology and Scientific Affairs at TePe.

First of all, what constitutes a perfect research project for the Eklund Foundation?

Dr Anna Nilvéus Olofsson: Applicants from all fields of dentistry are welcome, though we prioritise periodontology, implantology and cariology. The applications are assessed on well-defined criteria: novelty and originality, feasibility and scientific quality of the proposed research, and lastly, the merits of the applicants, as well as the quality of their applications. Every year, we receive a significant number of high-quality applications and are pleased to be able to select projects that really stand out.

What is your greatest challenge in selecting successful applicants?

We see it as an opportunity to contribute to high-quality research, rather than a challenge. The real challenges are tackled by the researchers, whereas it is our privilege to support them.
How can the results of the research projects be integrated into dental practice?

It depends on the aim and characteristics of the projects, but as the research process often runs for an extended period of time, the outcome cannot be realised in practice before the results are thoroughly analysed and compiled. The majority of the applications for funding are in their initial stages, and we expect a number of our selected projects to have strong clinical relevance in the long run.

For instance, we know for a fact that globally there is a growing elderly population with more implants and prosthetic constructions. Research results will contribute to knowledge about how to address these challenges. Another highly topical research focus is the connection between oral and general health, which may influence medicine from a wider perspective. We look forward to seeing how the funded projects will contribute to odontological knowledge and what clinical impact they will have in the future.

How does the Eklund Foundation differ from other organisations that support research in the field of dentistry?

Some foundations work locally, while others—such as the Eklund Foundation—work globally. Many different types of foundations are needed to support as much high-quality research as possible, and there is no competition between them. It is important to stress that research has to be carried out independently from company interests in order for it to be unbiased. Thus, the Eklund Foundation operates entirely independently from TePe. The foundation is a way for the owners of TePe to show their appreciation for the dental profession and create something that will contribute to knowledge and development in the field of odontology for many years to come.

Do you see dentistry becoming more medical, embracing prevention and primary prophylaxis?

Prevention already plays a big role and will become even more prominent in the future. Good oral hygiene and good oral health have turned out to be of wider importance than initially thought. Oral health is not merely about brushing one’s teeth, cleaning interdentally and having a good oral health routine; rather, it is about maintaining a healthy lifestyle, of which oral hygiene is an essential part. In recognition of this, TePe was recently awarded a life science prize. This is a clear indication that oral hygiene belongs to the domain of life sciences, and it pleases me to see oral health being placed in a wider health context.

Is TePe’s philosophy reflected in the Eklund Foundation in any way?

Although they exist independently of each other, both TePe and the Eklund Foundation place high value on close relationships with the dental community. TePe was founded in close collaboration with the profession and listens to their specific needs and issues, which in turn translates into the development of new products. The goal is not merely to develop visually attractive oral health products; every product has a clinical relevance. As a dentist, I can thus fully endorse TePe’s product portfolio.

Lastly, how can researchers apply for funding?

All information regarding the application process is available at www.eklundfoundation.org, including the application form and clear instructions on how to apply. The application period opens in May each year, and the projects that will receive funding are announced in the autumn.

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Facts about the Eklund Foundation

– Founded in 2015 by the Eklund family
– Supported by a donation of €5.5 million
– Next application period starts in May 2019
– More information is available at www.eklundfoundation.org