

AARHUS UNIVERSITY

IPSEN LECTURE 2020



**Professor
Johannes Ipsen**



**MD, Ph.D.
Albert Hofman**

May 14, 2020

Lecture at 13.00-14.15

Place:

Sea Lake Auditorium (Jeppe Vontillius), Building: 1252 - 310,
Bartholins Allé 3, 8000 Aarhus C

Followed by a reception in building 1261-118 "Frokoststuen", Bartholins Allé
2, 8000 Aarhus C

Why are epidemiologists so bad at epidemics?

Albert Hofman, MD, PhD

Department of Epidemiology, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA, USA

It is generally agreed among epidemiologists that one of the main uses of epidemiology is to provide 'the big picture' in morbidity, mortality and its possible causes. John Gordon, who was indirectly instrumental in the appointment of Prof Ipsen at the Harvard School of Public Health, called epidemiology "the diagnostic discipline of mass disease". It comes therefore as somewhat of a shock to realize that most epidemics of chronic diseases have not been "diagnosed" by epidemiologists and that these epidemics generally have been recognized first by others, and only after a long delay. I will illustrate these assertions by review of the current opioid epidemic in the US, by the epidemic of obesity and related type 2 diabetes, and by the lung cancer epidemic of the 20th century. Also, epidemiologists have missed the decline in incidence of major chronic diseases, in particular of coronary heart disease in the second half of the 20th century, and more recently of dementia and Alzheimer disease. In this Ipsen Lecture, I will examine why epidemiologists are so bad at epidemics, and what possibly may be done about this.

Albert Hofman, MD, PhD. Chair of the Department of Epidemiology and the Stephen B. Kay Family Professor of Public Health and Clinical Epidemiology at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston, Massachusetts (USA)

Dr. Hofman is chairman of the Harvard Department of Epidemiology since 2016. Prior to that he was chair of epidemiology from 1988 to 2016 at the Erasmus Medical Center, in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. He is the initiator and principal investigator of two population based, prospective cohort studies: the Rotterdam Study and the Generation R study. Data-collection for these studies started in 1990 and 2002, respectively. These cohort studies have in common that they target multiple common diseases, have a very extensive and state-of-the-art assessment of the putative determinants of these diseases, and employ as much as possible new technologies to be applied in the setting of epidemiologic population studies. The study of a multiple outcomes, in particular neurological, cardiovascular and endocrine diseases, has enabled the investigation of the interrelations of those diseases, and thereby of the co-morbidity and co-etiology of various diseases with a large population burden. This has made the findings in these studies generally useful for public health purposes as well as for clinical medicine. More recently Dr Hofman has been the initiator of the Alzheimer Cohorts Consortium. His current research focuses on the intersection of public health and clinical medicine.

PROGRAM:

13.00-13.10 Welcome and introduction to Albert Hofman by Professor Cecilia Ramlau-Hansen, Department of Public Health, Epidemiology

13.10-14.15 Lecture by Albert Hofman, MD, PhD, (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/albert-hofman/>)
Why are epidemiologists so bad at epidemics?

14.15-16.00 Reception: "Frokoststuen" building 1261-118, Bartholins Allé 2,
8000 Aarhus C

Please register before May 1, 2020:

<https://www.conferencemanager.dk/ipsen2020>

Kind regards,
Department of Public Health,
Aarhus University