



Further perspectives

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Applications of TPC and TFCI

TPC:

- Petersen, Osler & Ekstrøm (2021): Data-driven model building for life-course epidemiology. *American Journal of Epidemiology*.
- Andersen et al. (2023). Nighttime smartphone use, sleep quality, and mental health: investigating a complex relationship. *Sleep*.
- Foraita et al. (2024): A longitudinal causal graph analysis investigating modifiable risk factors and obesity in a European cohort of children and adolescents. *Scientific Reports*.
- Paquin et al. (2025). Social and mental health pathways to institutional trust: A cohort study. *Social Science & Medicine*.

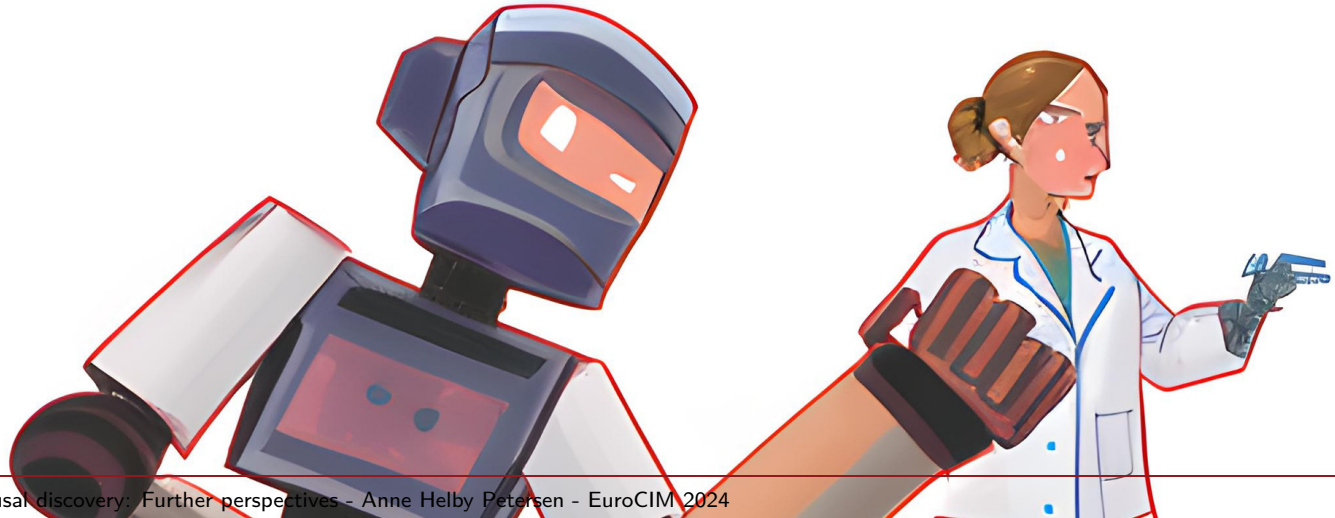
TFCI:

- Lee et al. (2023): Causal determinants of postoperative length of stay in cardiac surgery using causal graphical learning. *The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery*.



On practical usefulness of causal discovery

- Didelez (2024). Invited Commentary: Where Do the Causal DAGs Come From?. *American Journal of Epidemiology*.
- Petersen, Ekstrøm, Spirtes & Osler (2023). Constructing Causal Life-Course Models: Comparative Study of Data-Driven and Theory-Driven Approaches. *American Journal of Epidemiology*.
- Textor (2025). Invited Commentary: When will causal structure learning become practical? *International Journal of Epidemiology.*
- Gururaghavendran & Murray (2025). Can algorithms replace expert knowledge for causal inference? A case study on novice use of causal discovery. *American journal of epidemiology.*



Other causal discovery algorithms

Today, we have considered two algorithms for constraint-based causal discovery (PC and FCI). Alternative approaches include:

- Score-based methods: Heuristic search through possible (CP)DAGs, score each model according to fit. Examples: GES (Chickering 2002), GRASP (Lam et al. 2022), BOSS (Andrews et al. 2023).
- Optimization-based methods: Try to estimate the global DAG structure at once. Examples: LiNGAM (Shimizu et al. 2006), NOTEARS (Zheng et al. 2018), DAG-GNN (Yu et al. 2019).

Fast-paced research field with many new algorithms being proposed each year.

Finite-sample and realistic real-world data performance receives much less focus.



Additional software for causal discovery

- R packages: `pcalg` (possible engine for `causalDisco`), `bnlearn` (possible engine for `causalDisco`), `tpc` (built on `pcalg`), `micd`
- Python: `causal-learn`
- TETRAD: Point-and-click software (also available in commandline (in Java), or via Python (`py-tetrad`). Super powerful! Main engine for `causalDisco`.



Causal inference after causal discovery

Dealing with **non-identified causal models**:

- IDA: Intervention calculus when the DAG is Absent. Bounding causal effects from a CPDAG (Maathuis, Kalisch & Bühlmann 2009) or MPDAG (Fang & He 2020)

Dealing with **post-selection issues**:

- Estimating model (CPDAG/TMPDAG) *and* estimating causal effects using the same data will generally lead to overfitting.
- Classical machine learning approaches may be used (data splitting, bootstrapping), although the topic is under-studied



Evaluation

Please fill out this short course day evaluation:
https://tinyurl.com/cdisco-eval



References (1/3)

Andersen, Sejling, Jensen, Drews, Ritz, Varga & Rod (2023). Nighttime smartphone use, sleep quality, and mental health: investigating a complex relationship. *Sleep*

Andrews, Ramsey, Romero, Camchong & Kummerfeld (2023). Fast Scalable and Accurate Discovery of DAGs Using the Best Order Score Search and Grow Shrink Trees. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*.

Chickering (2002): Optimal structure identification with greedy search. *Journal of machine learning research*.

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Fang & He (2020). IDA with Background Knowledge. In *Proceeding for Uncertainty in Artificial Intelligence.*

Foraita, Witte, Börnhorst, Gwozdz, Pala, Lissner, Lauria, Reisch, Molnár, De Henauw, Moreno, Veidebaum, Tornaritis, Pigeot & Didelez (2024): A longitudinal causal graph analysis investigating modifiable risk factors and obesity in a European cohort of children and adolescents. *Scientific Reports*.



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Textor, J. (2025). When will causal structure learning become practical?. *International Journal of Epidemiology*.

Yu, Chen, Gao & Yu (2019). DAG-GNN: DAG structure learning with graph neural networks. In *Proceeding of International Conference on Machine Learning*.

Zheng,Aragam, Ravikumar & Xing (2018). DAGs with no tears: Continuous optimization for structure learning. *Advances in neural information processing systems*.

