

The Dermato-Venereological State in Sweden

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Olle Larkö gives his views on dermato-venereology in Sweden. He has some pessimistic opinions regarding the lack of interest in research from the young dermatologists as well as rather optimistic opinions regarding dermato-venereology as a specialty in progress.

There are approximately 450 dermato-venereologists in Sweden. Over recent years there has been a big change in the way we work. Dermato-venereology has focused on a greater number of out-patient departments and fewer beds. In some cases the number of beds has been reduced to only 10% of the previous figure.

More patients are being treated with less money; this is an effect of reorganization of the speciality, but also of research. In Sweden, we have a relatively good economic system in which the number of beds is not a financial issue. In most places, the budget includes everything except sick leave costs, i.e. it includes staff salaries, building rent, curtains, drugs, etc. There are many examples of research leading to less expensive healthcare in dermato-venereology.

Swedish dermato-venereology is an international leader in the field of occupational dermatology. This area can be very costly to society as failed treatments often lead to long sick leave or the retirement of relatively young people. This is an important area to study concerning health economics. We have a decreasing level of education and quality of care in dermato-histopathology and, in my opinion, certain areas of tumour treatment.

Research and development

Dermato-venereology is an attractive speciality and we can easily attract the most talented young doctors. However, relatively few doctors want to engage in research, and with the

current high level of vacancies for doctors in Sweden we have problems engaging young doctors in research. This may lead to more expensive and lower quality care. A further threat is the interest in cosmetology, which is very lucrative but not very good for the image of the speciality.

In addition, there is the threat of reduced interest in venereology. Research in this field in particular needs to be more active, otherwise there is a risk that these patients will be lost to other areas of medicine.

Opportunities

Dermato-venereology is attractive and we can choose the best young doctors. A further opportunity is the high interest of society in dermato-venereology and the important diseases that we treat. With an increasing incidence of skin diseases, such as atopic dermatitis and skin cancer, society's interest in dermato-venereology is likely to increase even further. Yet another opportunity is the vast number of new treatments available in dermato-venereology. An example being biologicals for the treatment of inflammatory dermatoses.

Future outlook

The future looks bright for dermato-venereology, with new possibilities for treating severe and chronic diseases. In addition, there is an increased need for dermato-venereology. The main threats to the speciality are the possibilities of damage due to decreased interest in research and increased interest in cosmetology.