

## Dermatologists from Abroad Come to Norway's Rescue<sup>1</sup>

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There are far too few dermatologists in many parts of Norway. Without dermatologists from abroad, dermatologic specialist services for patients with skin disease would have been much worse.

The training of specialists in dermatology and venereology in Norway takes place mainly at the university hospitals in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Tromsø and Stavanger. There are only three other departments of dermatology, and they are all very small.

Many dermatologists trained in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Tromsø and Stavanger don't want to move when they are certified as specialists. Rather than start in private specialist practice (with reimbursement rights) or become a senior dermatologist at another hospital, most of the new specialists choose to remain in the city where they trained. They are not to be blamed, as most of them are happily established with a house, spouse, children and friends. Instead of moving, many of them begin at private clinics without reimbursements rights, where patients have to pay high fees for a doctor's appointment. Thus, many private practices and senior dermatologist positions in other parts of the country remain vacant – had it not been for dermatologists who have come from abroad to our rescue.

There are currently around 185 practicing specialists in dermatology in Norway, of which about 50% work in hospital departments on fixed salaries and 50% in private practices with or without reimbursement rights. An increasing proportion of these are doctors from abroad with specialist training from abroad. They have come to Norway to build a new future for themselves and their families in a new country. They have settled in cities where no native Norwegian dermatologist want to work, mostly in the northern and eastern parts of

the country. They bring with them valuable knowledge and expertise. Thanks to them, patients with chronic skin diseases get significantly better health care.

We have every reason to be happy for this help to the Norwegian health care system and Norwegian dermatology. But it is a great paradox that Norway, as one of the world's richest countries, is not able to train enough specialists to meet the demands for dermatologists in all parts of the country. Some would say it is a failure. Something must be wrong with the system. Norway produces more medical doctors than ever – why can't Norway produce enough dermatologists?

There is little evidence that this situation will change soon. On the contrary, from 2015, all training posts for junior doctors wanting to become dermatologists are permanent, meaning that the doctors can remain in this position as long as they want (1). The consequence of this is uncertain. More on this will be discussed in a later issue of Forum.

### Literature

1. Gjersvik P, Saunes M, Grimstad Ø. Permanent positions for dermatology residents in Norway? *Forum for Nord Derm Ven* 2015; 20: 12–13.



Fig. 1. Norway welcomes the doctors from abroad! Photo credit: Reader's Digest

<sup>1</sup>Based on an article in *Hud & Helse*, published by Psoriasis- og Eksemforbundet (PEF) in Norway. Published with permission.