

Primary Health Care in the Barents Region

A collaborative meeting with representatives from Norwegian and Russian health authorities; How to improve collaboration and education in primary health care in the Barents Region

Minutes, Kirkenes 27th - 28th March 2007.

Participants from health authorities in Norway, Murmansk and Arkhangelsk Counties of the Russian Federation attended the meeting. The participant list including email-addresses is attached.

Connected to the courses “KOLS” and “Diabetes type 2” organized by the Norwegian Medical Association, Northern Norway, in Kirkenes 26th - 28th of March 2007 representatives from health authorities in Northwest Russia and Norway were invited to a workshop with the following topics:

- **Primary health care - development and cooperation in the Barents Region. What can we do to facilitate Russian-Norwegian cooperation?**
- **Education and research - practical design and development of projects.**

There were two meetings on the 27th March and one morning meeting on the 28th March. The “KOLS” and “Diabetes type 2” course participants joined the afternoon meeting on the 27th.

27th March:

13-16 pm

The Northern Norway Regional Health Authority - High North Health Committee meeting with Russian health authorities from Arkhangelsk and Murmansk.

Topics: Primary health care collaboration Norway - Russia. Status and future plans
Education/research – possibilities and challenges.

Introduction and debate facilitator: Scientific director SIH: Professor Jon Øyvind Odland.

Interpretation: Svetlana Kurthi Rambøll Storvik: Russian/Norwegian.

16.30-18.00 pm: Russian – Norwegian meeting

Participants: All participants from the KOLS and Diabetes 2 course

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|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Health North group | - see participant list |
| Invited leaders from Arkhangelsk | - see participant list |
| Invited leaders from Murmansk | - see participant list |
| Invited guests from Norway | - see participant list |

Interpretation: Svetlana Manankova Bye: Russian/Norwegian

Topic:

Primary health care - development and cooperation in the Barents Region. What can we do to facilitate Russian-Norwegian cooperation?

Introduction speeches:

- Professor Jon Øyvind Odland, Scientific director, SIH.
- Director Sergej Emmanuilov, Public Health Department, Arkhangelsk County.
- President Torunn Janbu, the Norwegian Medical Association.
- Deputy Chairman Arkady Rubin, Health Care Committee, Murmansk Region.
- Senior Advisor Odd Arild Haugen, Directorate for Health and Social Affairs, Norway.

28th March:

08.30 - 10.45 Meeting with The Northern Norway Regional Health Authority – the High North Committee and invited guests from Russia and Norway.

(Course participants had their own arrangement)

Topics:

Primary health care - practical design and implementation of projects

Education and research - practical design and development of projects

The group discussed concrete recommendations of future collaboration in the Barents region based on the proposals from the meetings on the March 27th.

Debate coordinator: scientific director, professor Jon Øyvind Odland, SIH

Interpretation: Svetlana Kurthi. Rambøll Storvik: Russian/Norwegian

Summary of all meetings:

From the beginning it became clear that the **establishment of post-graduate education and training of health professionals** should be given more priority in future collaboration between Norway and Russia. The systems for such post-graduate training are different in Russia and Norway, but a common opinion at the meeting was that there are many possibilities for exchange and development of curriculums and training programmes.

In Russia there is no degree or research field called “**Family medicine**”. There is a wish to harmonize their system towards what is common world-wide. A collaboration with Norway and Russia could strengthen this work.

How to **improve the quality in primary health care** and communication between patient and health professionals were other aspects that were discussed. Both research and training should be included when further work is established.

To improve the work within “**General practice**” **public health care and primary health care** is given priority both in Norway and in Russia. Mutual work and support including system development, education, training and research will be of great interest in both countries. In Russia different **health reforms** are introduced the last few years. Several of those give priority to family- and district-medicine. **To transfer higher quality health services from hospitals to remote districts and rural areas** is given great attention.

The Northern Norway Regional Health Authority (Helse Nord RHF) has decided to make this issue a high priority in the near future. Managing director Lars Vorland emphasizes that he wants more co-ordination of all the different health collaboration projects and assured that they want to be an active and stronger partner in future health collaboration between Northern Norway and Northwest Russia.

The Norwegian Medical Association (NMA), here represented by the president Torun Janbu, confirmed their interest to be a stronger partner in international health work. At the meeting the possibilities to include NMA in the development of education programmes, training and research were introduced. There was a great interest from all meeting representatives to include NMA in future collaborating projects.

Finland, Sweden and countries within the Arctic network should be included and co-ordinated into future plans. There are many similar projects going on. The programs within family medicine were mentioned as examples of projects that could profit with more integration between the different partners. From the Russian side they stressed the point that co-ordination would give much better resource exploitation for all involved in the work.

The meeting underlined that experience exchange, informal/formal training and **health professionals network building** combined with graduate/postgraduate education and research is important.

Funding of the work is a common responsibility. National and international sources of funding must be exploited. There are relatively few different sources for funding of health projects, especially regarding funding of research. At the meeting the common opinion was that both on Russian and Norwegian side there should be more pressure towards authorities to increase budgets for such work.

How to manage and organize the collaboration work was discussed from different sides. At the Norwegian side the Centre for International Health was suggested and confirmed their interest to be a strong coordinating partner. In Arkhangelsk they have their international department both at the Northern State Medical University and at the Health Care Department. In Murmansk they have their international consultant at the Health Care Committee. At the meeting it was recommended to strengthen those departments on both the Norwegian and the Russian side.

Mr. Sergej Emmanuilov, County Medical Officer at the Health Care Department, Arkhangelsk County, informed the meeting about how the new reforms influence daily work. This was confirmed by Mr. Arkady Rubin Deputy Chairman, the Health Care Committee of the Murmansk Region.

Reforming health systems takes time. Hospital routines, competence building of all health professionals, management and administration, budget routines and patient behaviour among others must be changed in a coherent development. Such changes will always take time. They both underlined that there is a great deal of good results achieved in the field, which should be mentioned more often.

To modernize is a better word to use than reforming. There is a great wish and need for multilateral collaboration in all this segments.

Development and use of **distance educational tools, telemedicine and new technology** were given priority at the meeting. Improvements of **infrastructure and methodology work** were also topics mentioned.

The meeting emphasized that health issues has not been given priority within the new **High North policy plans**. Both in Russia and Norway we need to put a stronger pressure on the need for more priority given to the health field. In the North we have a strong tradition in working cross borders. Future health collaboration between Norway and Russia should be developed with equal possibilities and benefits, shared contribution to funding and corresponding health professional contribution.

Murmansk and Arkhangelsk Counties and other counties in Northwest Russia must be **included more equally** in the collaboration. On the Norwegian side similar challenges were mentioned regarding the **3 counties of the Northern Norway**. All institutions represented at the meeting will have this in mind.

One of the topics mentioned was **emergency preparedness and development of emergency medicine** in the north. The development of industrial and business activities in the north gives a lot of challenges for health professionals. Initiatives have already been taken regarding collaboration projects and follow-up plans are under preparation. The topic is given high priority in both countries.

At the meeting with all the course participants the speakers introduced us to the health situation on both Norwegian and Russian side. Slides will be copied and available later.

At the summarizing meeting on March the 28th the group agreed on these follow-up activities:

1. To establish a **steering committee working with Primary health care**, with members representing a.o:

- Health authorities in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk County
- The Northern Norway Regional Health Authority (Helse Nord RHF)
- The County Medical Officer in Finnmark County
- Directorate for health and social affairs (SH.dir.)
- Norwegian Medical Association
- Centre for International Health (SIH) (UiTø and UNN)

Skal vi ha deltakende institusjoner med- eller la det være opp til oss når vi etablerer. Disse ble nevnt.

The steering committee for Primary Health Care should be established as soon as possible. The first task could be to make a concrete collaboration plan for the next 3-5 years. A meeting preferably in Murmansk within the summer time should be arranged. SIH was given the task to initiate such a meeting in close collaboration with colleagues in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. When well established, the network should **invite the other Barents countries** to participate in the collaboration.

2. To establish a stable **Barents network of** professionals working with **emergency preparedness and development of emergency medicine in the north**. There is already collaboration activities initiated on this issue, which on the Norwegian side is followed up by Oddvar Larsen, Olaf Jacobsen and Trine Sørensen.

3. To improve and administer the **contact and information system** for persons included in the different networks and collaborating projects. The international units in Tromsø, Murmansk and Arkhangelsk will collaborate on this task.

As a start of this work it was expressed a wish to make an overview of the health systems in Norway and Russia. SIH will initiate this work. In addition, a contact list from the meeting will be attached to these minutes.

4. The meeting agreed that it should be given more emphasize and political pressure on the improvement of **the border crossing regulations and governing**. This work must be done both in Russia and in Norway.

5. **The Norwegian Medical Association** will join this work mostly through their newly established committee for international affairs and their regional Committee North Norway. They will discuss further collaboration in detail with SIH.

6. The steering committee should be small and efficient. The whole group represented at the meeting should be invited within a year's time.

7. As a summary of the discussions the meeting launched their new collaboration initiative as
The Pomor Primary Health Care Programme

Tromsø, 16th April 2007

Solveig Wiesener

Director
Centre for International Health (SIH)