

The responsibility of medical associations in helping dysfunctional doctors “back on track”

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**DEN NORSKE
LEGEFORENING**

In a historical perspective, three responsibilities for a professional association have been:

- To manage and nurture a vast and specific body of knowledge, in our case medical knowledge
- To practice medicine with disinterestedness – meaning that the personal economy of the patients etc is of no importance, the service remains the same
- To take good care of all members, including self discipline if necessary



Aims and objectives for The Norwegian Medical Association today (NMA)

- To work for high professional and ethical standards among members
- To protect and promote the members' social, professional and economic interests
- To promote medical education, medical science and research
- To work for the improvement of health care services for the population
- To engage in health politics



NMA's three "helping hands"

1. A national network of specially trained colleagues, trained to help doctors.
And: "doctor-for-doctors"
2. Villa Sana – a resort and training place for distressed and dysfunctional doctors
3. Legal counseling in emergency situation (all members) and economic support in legal processes (decided by NMA's Legal committee)



1. Network of specially trained doctors

- History

- In 1986 a committee was established to assess the problem with burned-out doctors
- Different counties tried out various models to support colleges
- In 1992 the different support systems were evaluated
- Conclusion: The Central Board of the NMA decided that all its 19 county branches should establish collegial support for doctors.
- Financed by the Health and Pension Fund

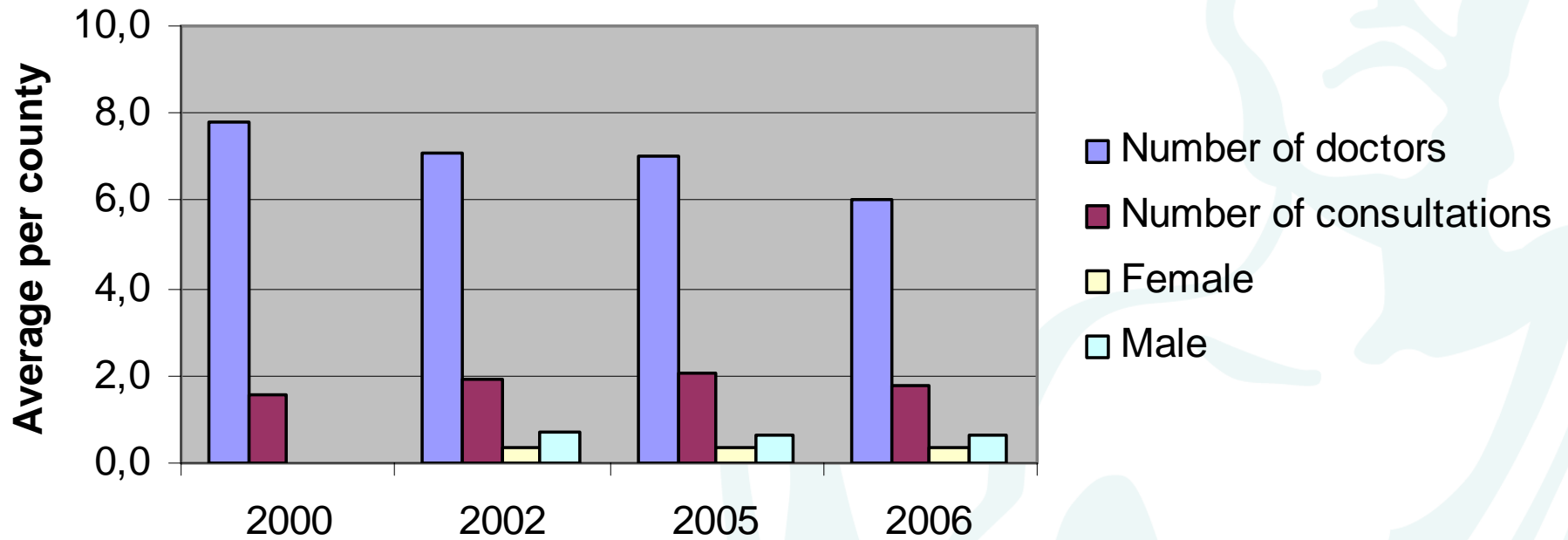


Educational program for colleagues helping doctors

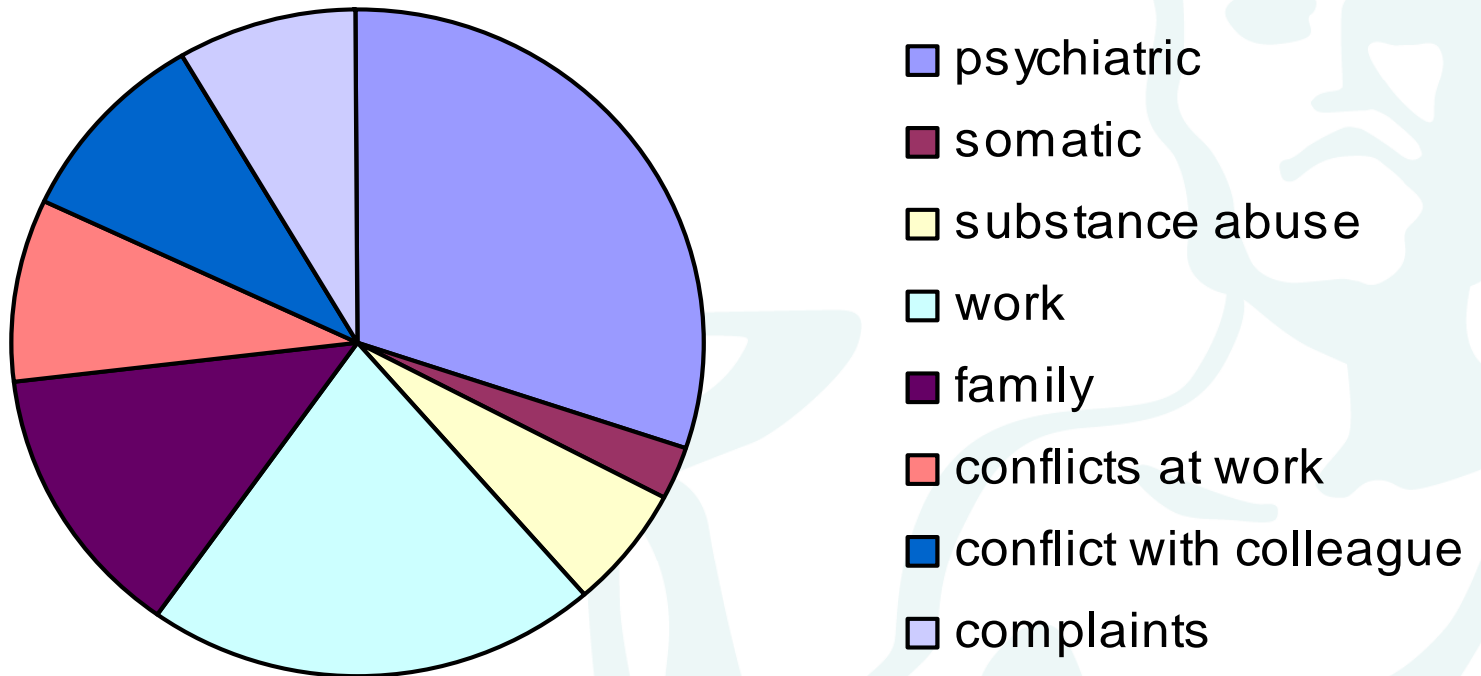
- The first two courses were held in 1994 – each county was asked to send five doctors
- Two mandatory three day courses for colleague support doctors were introduced in 1996
- A committee to coordinate the local activities was also established in 1996
- Funded by the NMA's Health and Pension Fund (SOP)



Activity 2000 - 2006



Reasons for contact 2006



2. Villa Sana



Villa Sana – established i 1998

- A resort for distressed and dysfunctional doctors
- Funded by the NMA Sickness Compensation Fund (SOP)
- Led by a psychiatrist
- Two modalities:
 - A one week courses for doctors who experience problems in relation to work, family etc. groups of approx. eight
 - Consultations, often with a psychiatrist, 6 - 8 hours during one single day.



Evaluation of Villa Sana (The Research Institute, 2006)

- Combination of quantitative and qualitative methods
- Research questions:
 - Does Villa Sana fulfill the agreement with the NMA?
 - Does the service have a preventive effect?
 - Is the service cost-effective?



Activity at Villa Sana 1998/99-2006

Year	Courses			Counselling			No of doctors, courses and counselling
	Doctors	Others	No. of courses	Doctors	Others	Total	
1998/9	61	1	8	71	2	73	132
2000	63	8	9			125 ¹	
2001	54	11	8			133 ¹	
2002	47	12	7	78	22	100	125
2003	41	10	6	94	23	117	135
2004	54	14	8	136	44	180	190
2005	47	8	7	102	34	136	149
2006	45	12	7	99	21	120	144

- 1) Did not differ between doctors and others in 2000 and 2001. 33 couples received counseling in 2000. The number in 2001 was 45



Conclusions

- The service complies with the agreement
- The users are very content
- The threshold for seeking ordinary treatment is lower after contact with Villa Sana
- Significant reduction in burn-out, psychological stress and thoughts about suicide one year after first contact
- The service is cost-effective compared to other alternatives



3. Legal help and counseling

A. Legal counseling by the lawyers in the Secretariat of the NMA – (available to all members)

- In emergency situations: look after the member's legal rights
- Handle very many different cases/topics:
Working conditions, compensation claims, case with the local or central Board of Health Supervision, possible criminal case, difficult media situations



B. NMA's board for legal help

Statues decided by the NMA.

”separates” the NMA from complicated legal cases

- Members can apply for economic compensation for the engagement of a private lawyer

Conditions:

- the case concerns practising as a doctor
- the case seems reasonable to proceed from a legal point of view,



What are the responsibilities of any medical association in relation to helping dysfunctional doctors back on track? (modern professional self discipline)

- Ethical guidelines – the necessary "roadmap", and an ethical council that can give advice - and warning - in specific situation
- The possibility to give legal advice to all members, both on an emergency basis and in long and complicated processes
- A network of designated helping colleagues – also by actively approaching colleagues who may be in need for help or counseling, but are not asking for it
- Should career planning and counseling, preferably starting in medical school, be a natural activity for a professional association? Preventive investment.

