

# Impact of the Nordic Specialist Course on the development of Palliative Medicine in the Nordic countries

A survey among 150 participants from five courses 2003-2013

Sigurdardottir V<sup>1</sup>, Edenbrandt C-M<sup>2</sup>, Hirvonen O<sup>3</sup>, Haugen DF<sup>4,5</sup>  
on behalf of the Steering Group of the Nordic Specialist Course in Palliative Medicine



<sup>1</sup>Palliative Care Unit, Landspítali University Hospital, Kopavogur, Iceland; <sup>2</sup>Dept. of Clinical Science, Lund University, Lund, Sweden; <sup>3</sup>Dept. of Oncology and Radiotherapy, University Hospital Turku, Turku, Finland; <sup>4</sup>Regional Centre of Excellence for Palliative Care, Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway; <sup>5</sup>European Palliative Care Research Centre (PRC), Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, Norway

## Background

The Associations for Palliative Medicine in the five Nordic countries have since 2003 organized a theoretical specialist training course in palliative medicine. The course consists of 6 week-long modules over 2 years, covering all major topics in palliative medicine.

Course participants must be approved in a relevant medical specialty. To obtain the course diploma, the participants must attend all modules, complete a limited research project, hand in an assignment after each module, and pass the final, written exam.

## Aim

To examine the impact of this educational program on the participants and on the field of palliative medicine in the Nordic countries.

## Method

A web-based survey was sent to the physicians who had completed the first five courses 2003-2013 (n=150).

## Results

The response rate was 84% (n=126). 64% were women. Before attending the course, 45% worked in a local/regional hospital, 35% in a university hospital, and 20% in primary care. 93% obtained the course diploma.

### After the course

- 70% had attended one or more palliative care conferences
- 26% had presented an abstract from the course project at a conference
- 13% had published a paper from the course project in a peer-reviewed journal
  
- 84% are currently working in a clinical palliative care setting, 56% as leaders
- 91% teach palliative medicine
- 41% participate in developing national guidelines for palliative care
- 49% are active in their national palliative medicine association
- 39% take part in lobbying activities for palliative care

## Conclusion

**The Nordic Specialist Course in Palliative Medicine has had a profound impact on participants' post-course careers and most are now working within palliative medicine as leaders, teachers and activists.**

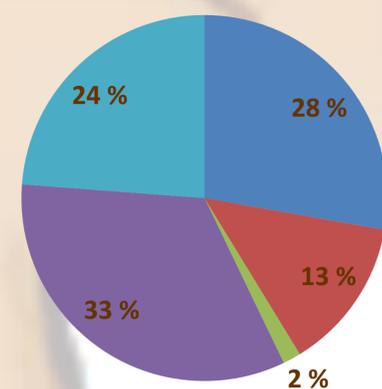
Palliative medicine has been approved as a formal competence field or subspecialty in Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden and expected in Iceland 2015/2016. In all countries, the Nordic course, or an equivalent course, is required for the theoretical part.



NSCPM Steering Group 2013-2016

### Nationality of the course participants (n=126):

■ Denmark ■ Finland ■ Iceland ■ Norway ■ Sweden



### Pre-course medical specialty of the participants (n=126):

Medical Specialty	n
General practice	27
Internal medicine*	26
Anesthesiology	23
Oncology	22
Geriatrics	16
Surgery*	9
Gynecology	5
Neurology	2
Psychiatry	1
No specialty**	7
Two specialties	12

\* Including all subspecialties      \*\* Finland