



THE NORWEGIAN COUNCIL FOR MUSCULOSKELETAL HEALTH

Introduction to the Norwegian Council for Musculoskeletal Health (2018)

The Norwegian NAN held its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday May 30th 2018, followed by our annual conference presenting the theme Musculoskeletal Health and Rehabilitation - How Does It Work?

The conference was opened by Sveinung Stensland, MP and leader of the Standing Committee on Health and Care Services. He was followed by Sigrunn Gjønnnes, senior advisor at the Directorate of Health, whose presentation was called What measures have been taken by the authorities - and are we good enough?

The following translation of the Norwegian Council for Musculoskeletal Health's Annual Report covers the 2017 calendar and fiscal year. As of 31.12.2017, the Council consisted of 16 member organizations, including officials, health-professional associations and user associations.

The Council has prepared a Handbook for Musculoskeletal Health documenting work tasks, responsibilities and routines, and will be an important tool and reference for all involved in the Council's activities. The handbook will help to make the organization more robust, transparent and less personally dependent in the future. In addition, the Board has undertaken a review of the council's Articles, Vision, Business Plan and Action Plan for the period 2018-2020, and these were adopted at the AGM. All members of the board, including the work committee, contribute voluntarily without financial compensation.

The council's website (www.muskelskjeletthelse.no) is now updated regularly and has become a good and comprehensive reference for the Council's activities. In addition, the Council has its own Facebook page, making it easier to promote activities and conferences.

Annual Report 2018

Musculoskeletal health and working life

Over the past few years, the board has shown an increasing recognition of the need for cross-sector collaboration to achieve our goal of improving musculoskeletal health. Musculoskeletal conditions comprise the leading cause of work absence and disability, and pose a major sustainability challenge for society in the years to come. As such, in 2017 the council opted to orient efforts towards the employment sector to a far greater extent than before.

Work and health was the theme of the Councils' conference in 2017; "Musculoskeletal Health and Work Life - Take Control of Your Own Life" which took place at the Norwegian Directorate of Health on May 30th 2017. The conference was aimed at health professionals, patient organizations, politicians public administration, business leaders, NAV employees [NAV administers a third of the national budget including unemployment benefits, work assessment allowances, sickness benefits, pensions, child benefits and cash-for-care benefits], and others with an interest in musculoskeletal disorders and working life. This was clearly a theme that engaged the event's many participants.

Additionally, Norway's largest trade union joined the Council in 2017, contributing to this solid foundation with the labour sector that will be an important milestone for further work. The Council hopes that other such organizations will follow this union's example in the future.

A partner for the authorities

The Board shares a belief that the Council will benefit from presenting itself as a single partner that health authorities can refer to on matters of musculoskeletal health. The field of musculoskeletal health is large, and while authorities have such a partner in other disease areas (the Council for Mental Health, Cancer Society, Diabetics Association etc) they lack this partner for musculoskeletal health.

Yet the Board believes in the danger of such ambitions remaining unrealised for as long as all Council activity occurs on the basis of volunteerism. Such tasks require a far greater capacity, which can only be achieved through sufficient finances to allow the building of the Council into a sustainable organization.

Late in 2017, it was made known that the Ministry of Health and Care Services will start work on a new strategy for non-communicable diseases (NCD strategy). Musculoskeletal disorders, injuries and diseases contribute significantly to the disease burden of non-communicable diseases, and the board is aware that this must be a high-priority target for Council.

With this in mind, the political leadership of the Ministry of Health and Care Services was contacted, and a meeting was granted with State Secretary Maria Jahrman Bjerke in January 2018. The Norwegian Council for Musculoskeletal Health has also submitted a response to the hearing in autumn 2017 to the proposed amendment under the Regulations on Habilitation and Rehabilitation to the definition of Habilitation and Rehabilitation. In this response the Council voiced that a new definition should not require set time-limits for rehabilitation, acknowledging that rehabilitation can be of lifelong duration. This was a very important distinction for many individuals with chronic illnesses and ailments.

Focus on rehabilitation in 2018

It was therefore natural to choose rehabilitation as the theme of the Council's annual conference in 2018. Planning and preparation for the conference entrusted to a separate working group towards the end of the 2017. The conference took place at the Norwegian Directorate of Health on May 30th 2018, and was entitled "Musculoskeletal Health and Rehabilitation - How does it work?" and was aimed at healthcare professionals, patient organizations, rehabilitation centres, politicians, public administration and others with an interest in musculoskeletal disorders and rehabilitation. The program was close to finalised around the new year and the Council succeeded in recruiting many of the country's foremost professionals, as well as user representatives and authorities, all focused on rehabilitation.

The need for updated clinical guidelines for low back pain

In 2016, the Norwegian Council for Musculoskeletal Health submitted a proposal to the Directorate-General for Health to review an update of the previous 2007 national clinical guidelines for low back pain. The previous guidelines were prepared under the aegis of FORMI in collaboration with the Directorate of Health. As these guidelines did not officially originate from the Directorate, they no longer have the status of an official National Clinical Guideline.

In 2017, the Directorate's Internal Policy Committee conducted a reorganization and revision of the criteria for updating guidelines, and the Council was informed that the previously begun process had been suspended. Now that the Directorate's internal revision is complete, the Council has been informed that our previously submitted proposal must be supplemented with further detail. This supplementary information has been prepared, approved by the board, and submitted to the Directorate in June 2018.