



News from the Nordic countries

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EDITORIAL

News from the Nordic Countries

The Swedish Research School in General Practice – A unique initiative to support research in general practice

In 2009, the Swedish Research Council announced a call for funding of a national research school in general practice. The initiative was taken to improve clinical research and PhD education. Other objectives were to support the creation of national and international networks in general practice research and education. The background of the call was that, in contrast to the vast clinical proportion of primary care, only 1% of all medical research was produced in general practice. Increased research activity was thus needed in general practice, where a rapidly growing part of health care is delivered. Another concern was the relatively high age of the present professors and senior lecturers in general practice. This calls for a new generation of active researchers, and the creation of a national research school in general practice would be an excellent way to accomplish this.

Umeå University appointed Professor Lars H. Lindholm from the Unit of Family Medicine at the Department of Public Health and Clinical Medicine to lead the application. The application was written in collaboration with the units of family medicine at Linköping and Göteborg universities, headed by Professors Lars Borgquist and Cecilia Björkelund, respectively, thus including three out of six family medicine units in Sweden in the network. The research council received three applications, and after an international assessment Umeå University in collaboration with Linköping and Göteborg was granted SEK 15 million over five years to run and administer the National Research School in General Practice. The research school has an international steering committee and is run by an executive group.

The research school is complementary to the PhD education with which the PhD students are already registered and are supervised by tutors in their home department. Thus, we will contribute with additional

facilities. There will be three pillars of the national research school in general practice. The first is the creation of four new PhD courses in addition to an adaptation of existing courses to a web format; all courses will in part be web-based in order to be accessible throughout Sweden. The second is the support of internationalization. Students are granted SEK 30 000 during their time in the research school, e.g. to visit foreign departments of general practice or to participate in courses given abroad. Finally, the research school will provide web-based seminar series. During the first year the focus of the seminars will be on scientific publication and presentation. As an example of activities, the PhD students will practise scientific writing and will be given individual feedback from Dr Stuart Spencer, the fast-track editor of *The Lancet*. In seminars led by Dr Simon Griffin, general practitioner at the MRC, Cambridge, PhD students will get feedback on their projects and learn how to review papers.

The research school will admit a total of 50 PhD students. The first 10 students started in September 2010 with a joint meeting in Vindeln, Umeå, Sweden. Their research covers areas such as cardio-metabolic diseases, incontinence and health care management. The web-based seminars have commenced, in which the students interact using the Adobe Connect® software. In February the first new course “Screening and prevention in primary health care” starts in Göteborg. The students’ evaluations of the seminars and meetings have been very positive so far. The seminars with our British teachers and the possibility to form a network for researchers in general practice are what the students appreciate most.

More information about the research school is available at: <http://www.forskarskolanallmanmedicin.se/en>

Comment by Dr Eva Jäklund, chair of the Swedish Association of General Practice Research in the field of general practice in Sweden is young, and there is a substantial need to support young doctors to take the

steps needed to become researchers. The academy has a great responsibility to support the general practitioners who follow their curiosity in search of the answers to their questions, often based on clinical experience. There is also, as I see it, a huge responsibility upon government to make sure that adequate funding and academic structure are available for our researchers. Research in general practice promotes health for the greater need. It should be a feather in the cap for any employer to have a general practitioner in research as member of staff.

The National Research School is an important initiative for our specialty. I hope that it will be a

cogent and lasting part of our research community. I also have high hopes that its spirit will spread throughout the Swedish academies of general practice and inspire young inquisitive doctors.

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