PHC for the Sámi in Norway

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Ole Mathis Hetta.

SÁMI NATION (PEOPLE) SÁMIS

- Indigenous people of: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Northern Russia
- Lapp or Lapplander is not an appropriate name for us
- Appr. 150,000, 50% of them in Norway

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The Sámis roamed all over the arctic parts of Russi-Fenno-Scandinavia

Sámis live across borders of four countries, but we are one people
We have in common across the state borders:
- Sámi flag
- Sámi National Day – Febr. 6th
- Sámi National Anthem
- Sámi Parliaments in Norway, Sweden, Finland
- Sámi Parliamentary Council across the borders
SÁMI FLAG

Sámi colours and the circle which is common to most indigenous peoples.

SÁMI PARLIAMENT BUILDING IN KARASJOK, NORWAY

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REINDEER HERDERS

Only 10 - 15% of the Sámis are reindeer herders.

SÁMI TENT

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International Declarations on Human Rights

Norway has ratified these declarations and implemented in national laws:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976)
- ILO Convention no.169 - Indigenious and Tribal Peoples Convention (1989)
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)

Alma Ata Declaration § 6

Primary health care is essential health care based on practical, scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development in the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination.

It forms an integral part both of the country's health system, of which it is the central function and main focus, and of the overall social and economic development of the community. It is the first level of contact of individuals, the family and community with the national health system bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work, and constitutes the first element of a continuing health care process.

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Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention
ILO Convention no.169 – 1989 - Article 25 about Health

1. Governments shall ensure that adequate health services are made available to the peoples concerned, or shall provide them with resources to allow them to design and deliver such services under their own responsibility and control, so that they may enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

2. Health services shall, to the extent possible, be community-based. These services shall be planned and administered in cooperation with the peoples concerned and take into account their economic, geographic, social and cultural conditions as well as their traditional preventive care, healing practices and medicines.

3. The health care system shall give preference to the training and employment of local community health workers, and focus on primary health care while maintaining strong links with other levels of health care services.

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PHC in Norway

- PHC in Norway is a municipal responsibility
- Municipal Health Act §1-3 defines which services should be given
- Equality and equity are highly esteemed core values in the Norwegian Health Care System
- Appr. 435 municipalities with different economy and different political priorities results great differences in the amount and quality of care given across the country

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PHC for the Sámi people in Norway

- Some Sámi persons live in probably more than 350 of the municipalities, including cities, towns and urban areas.
- Only in 7-8 municipalities are the Sámi in majority and these are in the traditional Sámi habitation areas in the north.
- How about the cultural adaptation given this framework?

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Equal services for all

- The Sámis in Norway have had access to health care services, social security services and educational services equal to the majority populations in the Nordic countries the last 50 years, although the services have not at all been adapted to the cultural needs.

(Included in the socialdemocratic welfare development in Scandinavia)

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Minority and majority care

Equal services may on the surface be alike, but in reality not suited for the Sámi. They are not equivalent when they are not adapted to Sámi culture and Sámi living conditions and Sámi language is not used in communication with the patients. In this way they do not reach to everyone equally.

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Lesson to learn from Canada

University of Mannitoba, Department of Community Health Services has done a lot of good research on adapting health care for the indigenous peoples in the North of Canada (medical interpreters, patient advocacy, cultural broking, cultural mediation, ethical dilemmas etc. - Prof Kaufert et al.)

Ole Mathis Hetta,
Small differences in disease pattern compared to the majority populations in Norway and Sweden, practically very little research in Finland and Russia comparing Sámi population with the majority populations in these countries.

The Sámi in Russia (less than 3000) in contrast to the Fenno-Scandinavia have high rates of suicide, violent deaths and alcohol consumption / alcoholism.

Different growth charts need to be used to monitor growth in early childhood

Higher prevalence of Lactose-intolerance among Sámi (Research in Finland)

Results from Sámi Health Research (3)

- Less MS (multiple sclerosis) among Sámi
  (Journal: Immunology, Vol: 115: Oivind Torkildsen et al: Ethnic variation of Fcg receptor polymorphism in Sami and Norwegian populations)

- Less cancer among Sámi:
  (European Journal of Epidemiology 17, 969-976, 2001), Sven Hassler, Per Sjölander et al)
  (European Journal of Cancer prevention 2005, 14:63-68, T. Haldosen and T. Tynes)
  - Lower incidence of cancer coli, lungcancer, malignant lymphoma, cancer prostata and breastcancer.
  - Higher incidence of ca. oesophagi and stomach cancer

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Results from Sámi Health Research (4)

- High frequency of accidents and injuries among reindeer herders - snowmobile-accidents, higher death rates

- Less alcohol abuse/alcoholism among Sámi in Northern Norway compared to the majority population and less drug abuse
  (International Journal of Circumpolar Health (IJCH 2008 67(1), Substance use among young indigenous Sami – a summary of findings from the North Norwegian Youth Study, Spein AR)

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Results from Sámi Health Research (5)

- **Cardiovascular diseases**
  - Among Sámi in Norway and Finland—low incidence and mortality and higher risk for women than for men compared with the majority population.
  - Increasing risk over the last 40 years for cardiovascular deaths among non-reindeer-herding Sámi (Sweden)
  - Lower risk for reindeer-herding Sámi compared to majority population.

- **Stroke**


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Results from Sámi Health Research (6)

Comparative Study of health and behavior between Sámi and Norwegian youth in Northern Norway in 1994-95 and 1997-98:

- Both Sámi and Norwegian ethnical identity depends on where they live, mother tongue and occupation of parents.
- Sámi parents have in average lower educational background and show less interest in the education of their children.
- Sámi youth have equally good psychic health compared to other youth in Northern Norway.
- No differences in frequency of suicidal thoughts or suicidal attempts.
- No difference in age of sexual debut.
- Sámi youth have in average lower body height.
- Sámi girls are more satisfied with their own body.
- No difference significant smoking habits.
- Less alcohol use and drug abuse among the Sámi youth.

(Siv Kvernmo et al. North Norwegian Youth Study, 2003)

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Results from Sámi Health Research (7)

Forekomst av selvrapporterte selvmordsforsøk blant samisk og norsk ungdom (%)

(Silviken & Kvernmo, 2007)

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Results from Sámi Health Research (8)

(Hva kan forklare den “moderate” selvmordsraten blant samer?)

(Silviken 2007)

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Results from Sámi Health Research (8)

- Higher frequency of dissatisfaction with medical practitioners among the Sámi speaking (language, culture)

(International Journal of Circumpolar Health (IJCH 2008 67(1), Sami speakers are less satisfied with general practitioners’ services - Nystad T, Melhus M, Lund E)

References, links

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Ole Mathis Hetta,
- Ollu giitu
- Thank you very much