Joint 5th Joint AEMH-FEMS General Assembly
10-11 May 2024, Berlin, Germany

Members reports

Please name 3 main current concerns of the healthcare system in your country :
• **Economic Challenges** • **To sustain and recruit health care personnel.** • **Doctors' workload and working conditions**

Full report

2023 was a very turbulent year for Norwegian health care and for Norwegian hospital doctors. We have many great challenges facing us, especially regarding the difficult economic situation. In addition, shortage in health care workers including doctors is something we all are affected by. A lot of our work has been to secure an adequate working environment and salary for our doctors and hospital leaders, and to reduce the negative effects and consequences these challenges have on personnel as well as our patients.

In the northern parts of our country, a structural process initiated by the government has been undertaken. Due to the special topography and sparse population, the difficult economy and lack of nurses and doctors hit the hardest in this region. This structural process is basically a call for the closure of smaller hospitals. Since distances between hospitals are vast, and the weather often is bad for travel, this proposes some difficult challenges. The solutions proposed are inconsistent, panicky, and bad for both patients and health care workers. And have become a hot topic within the coalition government. So far this has resulted in a watered-out process with no conclusion.

Furthermore, in other regions the most difficult topic is the introduction to a new electronic patient journal. It's an American system, from Epic, the biggest supplier in the states. The idea is to have one system for both primary health care and hospitals. "One patient, one journal" has been the slogan used. Epic has been used several places, but this idea of a huge platform that will solve all electronic problems, with the use of Epic, has previously been tested in Denmark and Finland. Both of which have encountered huge problems. In Norway, doctors have tried to stand up and called for a different solution, to no avail. Epic was introduced and is causing all sorts of problems. The story of this is not finished, but we will struggle with this system for years to come. The digital age is supposed to solve all problems in our hospitals, but this far have

contributed to strengthen rather than weaken the challenges we face. Hopefully this will change over time.

Finally, the biggest topic of last year was related to working conditions in the hospitals. Mainly for our younger colleagues, but also for senior doctors. This topic has been at the forefront in our discussions for many years but was given national attention in June of last year. The reason for this attention was a young colleague who ended her life early. Her husband blamed the workplace and work-environment in a public statement on Facebook. This caused a huge reaction on social media, with the hashtag #legermåleve. This is translated to "doctors need to live". The statement is not a direct quote to stop suicide, but to reflect that work cannot burn you completely out.
Stories from all over the country were published both in traditional media and on social media, with a public and political discussion following in its wake.

The upside of this movement is the attention poor working conditions for hospital doctors have received, the downside is that the government and hospital leaders not quite have understood the underlying problem.

Norway has a strong public health care system, based on an idea that all people across the country is entitled to the same level of care, at no cost. The private sector and insurance sector have traditionally been a small supplement to the public system. However, it is rapidly growing. The challenges the hospitals encounter the next few years will show if we are facing lasting changes in how the health care system in Norway is organized. Or will politicians take the necessary steps to preserve and save our current system.