

Presentation of the Network Model for the Regional Centre of Excellence for Palliative Care, Western Norway

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Research

Our centre is involved in a number of research projects/developmental projects in palliative care

- Establishing ESAS (Edmonton Symptom Assessment System) as a common tool for systematic use in palliative care in our region.
- Palliative care for ALS patients.
- Psychologist service on a regular basis to palliative in-patients at the regional University Hospital.
- Low dose ketamine as an adjuvant to morphine in advanced cancer patients with intractable pain.
- A survey of Sunniva Hospice day care centre and home care services in Bergen.
- Comparison of palliative care needs and services in a town district, a rural coastal district and a farming district in Rogaland County.
- The role of physiotherapy in palliative care in our region.

We are also engaged in studies in cooperation with the other regional centres of excellence.

Background

As part of the Norwegian National Cancer Plan (1999-2003), five regional centres of excellence for palliative care have been established, one in each of Norway's five health care regions.

The government has assigned these centres to research, education, and teaching, and given them a role in coordinating, promoting and developing palliative care in their respective regions.

The Western Norway Health Care Region covers a population of 0.9 million and has about 2,100 cancer deaths per year. It is estimated that at any one time approximately 4,000 cancer patients, in addition to patients with other advanced, life-threatening diseases, need access to palliative care services.

Palliative care is provided as an integrated part of the official health care system, which includes a small number of specialized palliative care programs.

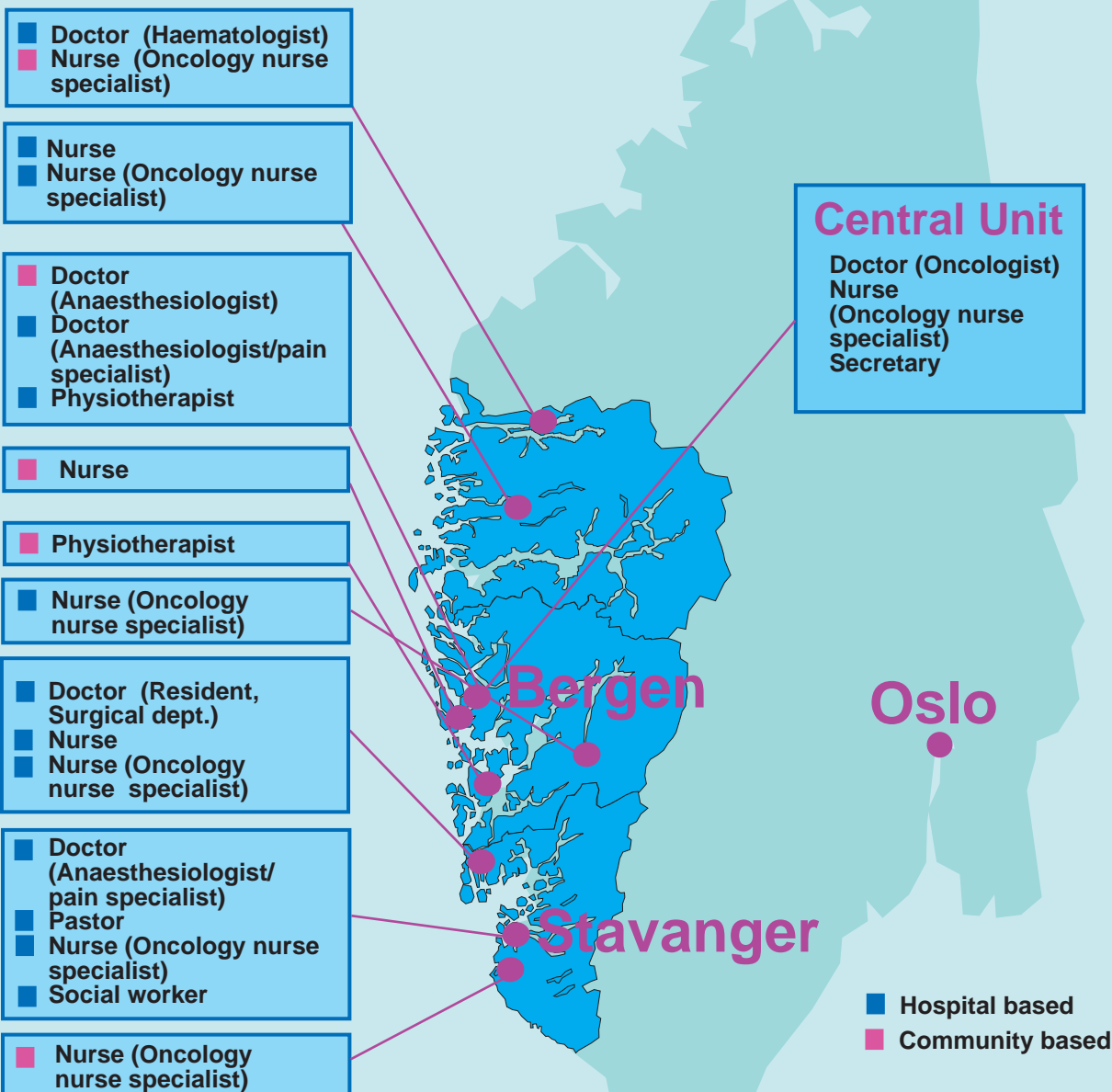
Activities

The co-workers in the network

- give advice to health care professionals in hospitals, nursing homes, and primary care
- arrange courses and other teaching sessions
- prepare guidelines and information material
- aid local hospitals and communities in planning and establishing palliative care services: multidisciplinary pain teams, palliative care teams, palliative beds or units
- work to establish better routines for patient referral and communication between hospitals and primary care
- work in cooperation with hospitals, primary care professionals, educational institutions, the Norwegian Cancer Society, and other non-profit organizations

Organization

Our centre was established 01.01.2001. It is organized with a central unit for research and education at the regional University Hospital in Bergen, connected to a multidisciplinary network of part-time clinical co-workers, as shown on the map. These doctors (5), nurses (9), physiotherapists (2), pastor (1) and social worker (1) are recruited from palliative care activity in local hospitals and primary care. They now have one day a week devoted to research, teaching, advisory or developmental work in palliative care, and cover the districts of Western Norway. The team members also have a special responsibility for promoting the aims of palliative care within their own health care professions.



Conclusions

- This organizational model enables us to offer our services to hospitals as well as primary care professionals throughout the region.
- The concept is based on using and expanding existing resources and knowledge.
- By means of the network, we also manage to link together the specialized palliative care programs in the region.
- Co-workers working alone or in small groups in remote areas are included in a team and may support each other.
- A main advantage of the model is that the clinical co-workers have necessary knowledge of the local conditions for patients in need of palliative care.