

# Use of complementary and alternative medicine at Norwegian and Danish hospitals.

Posted At : May 2, 2011 2:50 PM | Posted By : [Tim Brunson, PhD](#)

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**BACKGROUND:** Several studies have found that a high proportion of the population in western countries use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). However, little is known about whether CAM is offered in hospitals. The aim of this study was to describe to what extent CAM is offered in Norwegian and Danish hospitals and investigate possible changes in Norway since 2001.

**METHODS:** A one-page questionnaire was sent to all included hospitals in both countries. The questionnaire was sent to the person responsible for the clinical activity, typically the medical director. 99 hospitals in the authority (85%) in Norway and 126 in Denmark (97%) responded. Given contact persons were interviewed.

**RESULTS:** CAM is presently offered in about 50% of Norwegian hospitals and one-third of Danish hospitals. In Norway CAM was offered in 50 hospitals, 40 of which involved acupuncture. 19 hospitals gave other alternative therapies like biofeedback, hypnosis, cupping, ear-acupuncture, herbal medicine, art therapy, homeopathy, reflexology, thought field therapy, gestalt therapy, aromatherapy, tai chi, acupressure, yoga, pilates and other. 9 hospitals offered more than one therapy form. In Denmark 38 hospitals offered acupuncture and one Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Light Therapy. The most commonly reported reason for offering CAM was scientific evidence in Denmark. In Norway it was the interest of a hospital employee, except for acupuncture where the introduction is more often initiated by the leadership and is more based on scientific evidence of effect. All persons (except one) responsible for the alternative treatment had a medical or allied health professional background and their education/training in CAM treatment varied substantially.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The extent of CAM being offered has increased substantially in Norway during the first decade of the 21(st) century. This might indicate a shift in attitude regarding CAM within the conventional health care system.

BMC Complement Altern Med. 2011 Jan 18;11:4. Salomonsen LJ, Skovgaard L, la Cour S, Nyborg L, Launsø L, Fønnebø V. National research center in complementary and alternative medicine, NAFKAM Faculty of health science, University of Tromsø, Norway. laila.salomonsen@uit.no

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