

ANNUAL REPORT 2002 FOR THE NORDIC CANCER UNION

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The Nordic Cancer Union (NCU) was founded in 1949. In the earlier history, the activities were not too numerous. The birth of the Nordic Cancer Control Plan in 1987 transferred the Nordic Cancer Leagues to a new and active era of collaboration. The Plan was initiated by the Nordic Council of Ministers. This Plan (Handlingsplan mot Kraeft) was published in 1989. In order to decide upon needed actions, up-to-date epidemiological base line data was received and estimates given on the expected effects of various control efforts. At this stage the Nordic Cancer Control Plan was disrupted by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

However, a Nordic database for cancer incidence had been created, and many projects were starting. The Nordic Cancer Union decided to continue the work without governmental funding.

The new research evidence was an excellent basis for the Nordic countries in their planning and other activities. The National Cancer Control Plan of Norway and later Denmark were based on this data, as well. Psycho-social issues gained more importance. Smoking-reducing programs started in co-operation.

All this co-operation has led to fruitful advocacy and other activities in the EU and in the international cancer organisations. Joint programs have increased knowledge on Nordic cancer problems and on ways how to solve them. The networking has stimulated the individual cancer societies and eventually made them stronger. These years have also shown which joint actions are not cost-effective.

Current programs

Current programs include public information, patient support and Nordic cancer research. A special research fund was started in 1989 to increase support for cancer research projects in the Nordic countries, in both planning and implementation phases. In all, the population of the Nordic countries is about 22 million, which is a good base for cancer epidemiology. Also, clinical studies especially in rare cancers benefit from a joint funding system. The fund is run by a special secretariat and the steering committee comprises one representative from every scientific committee of the national cancer leagues.

In recent years the amount of funds allocated from this fund has been approximately 0.7 million euros per year. The following criteria must be met:

- The project must be relevant to cancer
- The project must be a joint project involving at least two Nordic countries
- Nordic synergy is essential
- The project must lead to new, relevant findings Evaluation of the research fund has shown that it stimulates Nordic cancer research and creates synergy.

The Nordic Cancer Union today

The Nordic Cancer Union is directed by a Board consisting of the Chairs and Secretaries General of the five cancer leagues. The Faroe Islands Cancer Society has an observer status, and the Cancer Societies of Greenland and Åland participate the meetings. The Board meets once a year, normally in connection with a scientific symposium. The Secretaries General meet more often.

The chairmanship rotates by a three year period. Chiefs of information, economics and fund-raising meet each other, as well, so do the experts of psycho-social issues. The Nordic Scientific Board consists of one representative from every national scientific board. The scientific secretariat stays in one country three consecutive years.

Budget procedure

The Board has decided the following budget procedure:

- at the first meeting of each year, the secretaries general should approve a draft budget framework for the research fund and the other activities
- the framework should be presented to the NCU Board for adoption, and
- the framework for other activities be filled in on the basis of applications from the cancer societies at a meeting of the secretaries general in the autumn.

Financing

The Nordic Cancer Union's accounting year coincides with the calendar year. Cost allocation percentages were fixed for distribution of costs between the member countries.

The individual member country's share of the costs is calculated on the basis of the individual societies' income minus any government grants and fund-raising costs.

In 2002, the Nordic Cancer Union's budget was EUR 1.300.000; i.e. EUR 700.000 for the research

fund and EUR 600.000 for other activities such as patient support and activities within the fields of prevention.

NCU and ANCR

The cancer registries continue their very close co-operation via the Association of the Nordic Cancer registries (ANCR). The NCU continues to support joint research programs.

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The Cancer Society of Finland has the honour to host the secretariat in 2003-2005 and wishes this co-operation warmly welcome.