

NORDIC HEALTHCARE SECTORS ARE CHALLENGED



Nordic healthcare sector has been challenged by growing expectations from the general public and politicians. People are living longer, resulting in more chronically ill patients and elderly individuals. At the same time, there are more treatment options, new technologies and medications than ever before. The cutbacks mean that more tasks are being handled by fewer caregivers. This puts a strain on resources. Data and innovative solutions can be a cost-effective tool in solving these challenges.

The Nordic healthcare sector is under pressure. Tough decisions need to be made and healthcare institutions need to be more efficient and focused without sacrificing quality. The healthcare system needs to deliver more for less. The expectations for the healthcare sector include that:

- The health of Nordic citizens improves and they enjoy more healthy years of living.
- The healthcare system offers safe, comprehensive, patient-centered, high-quality treatments.
- Healthcare system resources are used as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The healthcare sector is a cornerstone of our modern welfare state.

Overcrowding is an issue in our hospitals, where a rising number of elderly patients show up with multiple diagnoses and chronic diseases, while at the same time demand for healthcare services is increasing with the rising affluence, level of patient education, and easier access to effective treatment.

Patient safety is in the spotlight. Patients expect a high level of safety, while at the same time the impact of healthcare services needs to be effectively documented in real-time and presented to administrators on a local, regional and national plane so that it is clear how a specific initiative helped both the patient and the healthcare system.

Article from "Data-driven management in healthcare – inspiration for a change", published by SAS Institute, 2017. Read the entire report here: www.sas.com/nordic/healthcarereport

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Therefore, it is crucial that the healthcare system runs smoothly and efficiently and offers easy, equal access to high-quality treatment throughout.

In the Nordics, we have a complex healthcare system with multiple sectors and stakeholders. Due to the country's size, technological skills, and extensive experience in cross-sectoral and professional collaboration, we have a unique opportunity to promote further development and utilization of new community health and medical technology solutions.

“What is happened to the cooperation between research institutions, businesses, and the healthcare sector? Where is IT innovation and why do we not see more private sector/public sector partnerships?”

Innovation in the future must be directly linked to operations and the daily challenges of organizations as well as to issues in the Danish healthcare system. There is a need for a heightened focus on cross-sectoral cooperation between the public and private sectors.

High-quality data at the right time and the right place provides the basis for innovation. The data should be self-explanatory, suggest an intervention and support the treatment of individual patients.

UNHARNESS DATA, IMPROVE COMMUNITY HEALTH

In the Nordics, we collect a lot of data in the healthcare arena – more data than we in fact analyze and act on. Data is often not immediately available and clinical data is used more for research and political purposes than for actual local or regional management needs.

Digitalization is a means to achieve political healthcare goals. To mention one example is Denmark. A national strategy for digitalizing the healthcare system has been adopted in Denmark and the regional governments have published a common strategy to ensure that digitalization of the healthcare sector is in fact implemented¹. The mission is to provide patients and caregivers in Denmark with clear, effective and consistent digital options. We realize that cross-sectoral initiatives need to be strengthened, which requires transparent agreements and a clear assignment of roles in the digital cooperation between the Danish government, municipalities, and general practitioners.²

Are we providing too little, too much or the wrong documentation? Are we using the data distilled from all this documentation to be smarter and more professional or to identify what is hunky dory and what is not working so well so that we can learn from it and spread the word about what is in fact working? Do we know how to use all of the data people collect on their own with gadgets, such as wrist monitors, watches, and apps - information that can tell us a lot about a person's life outside the hospital's four walls?

There is no debating that the healthcare sector must collect data – for without data, there is no development.

¹ <http://sundhedsdatastyrelsen.dk/da/rammer-og-retningslinjer/om-digitaliseringsstrategi>

² <http://www.regioner.dk/services/nyheder/2016/maj/et-staerkere-og-mere-trygt-digitalt-danmark>

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Unambiguous legislation is needed for the collection and use of patient data

This applies to hospitals as well as general practitioners and specialists. Data collection must be relevant and transparent and take place with the approval of the public. This requires unequivocal legislation.

THE VISION OF A BETTER HEALTHCARE SYSTEM FOR LESS MONEY

In order for a transition to data-driven management to succeed, significant cultural, organizational and educational changes are required. Is the healthcare system ready to rise up to the challenge?

The vision may be a healthcare system that is structured like an organization that:

- is based on values
- offers individualized treatment with the patient as an important dialogue partner
- integrates IT systems and data-driven management as the basis for documentation, learning and analysis in the organization.

The following paragraph discusses how data-driven management can form the basis for this documentation, learning, and analysis.

A VISION BASED ON FOUR PRINCIPLES

- The analytical organization
- The value-based healthcare system
- Individualized treatment
- Real-time data along one common IT pathway

The hypothesis is that if we follow this vision, we can ensure value creation as well as a solid foundation for carrying out the transformation that is required for the healthcare sector.

There are already tried-and-true systems available today that can easily be used in certain situations. Good examples of data-driven management in Denmark include the reduction in the use of restraints and medication usage in psychiatric institutions and the use of text analysis, which has provided a Danish hospital with broad insight into hospital-acquired infections.^{3,4} This is the result of combining years of clinical experience with modern technology and is a good example of how data can help improve everyday patient safety.

³ Ballerup Mental Health Center, https://www.sas.com/da_dk/customers/regionhovedstadensdata.html

⁴ Lillebælt Hospital, http://www.sas.com/da_dk/customers/sygehus-lillebaelt-2015.html

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