

Jeg er en klinisk ernæringsfysiolog! I am a Dietitian!

The dietetic profession is a fairly new profession in Norway. The first dietitian started in 1953, after Dr Blegen, a nephrologist, had an internship in the USA, and discovered the profession of dietetics. Many years have gone by, and we still do not have clinical dietitians in every hospital.

Norway's population size is around 4.7 million, bordering Sweden, Finland and Russia. We cultivate only 3% of our land and have 29% forest and 5% of our country is covered by water. Our life expectancy is 80 years and we have a fertility rate of 1.8 children per woman. Our Gross Domestic Product per capita is high at 42,222 dollars, second in the world only to Luxembourg, which has a GDP of 45,778 dollar.

Our association, The Norwegian Association of Dietitians affiliated with The Norwegian Association of Researchers (called KEFF in Norway) was founded in 1985, and is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. One of many goals for clinical dietitians in Norway are: 1) Reimbursement for dietitians, 2) internship for students, 3) along with continued improvement of our education, and not the least, 4) increase the numbers of dietitians both in hospitals and in the communities.

In 2009 there were 282 authorized clinical dietitians in Norway, only 100 positions, divided on 170 dietitians working in hospitals. Other clinical dietitians are working in other health care fields like the food- and pharmaceutical industry. Unfortunately very few are working in the community.

If you want to become a clinical dietitian in Norway, you need to spend 5 years at the university to obtain a Masters degree. We currently have two Universities where the course is offered, one in Oslo and one in Bergen, which only started in 2005. The University of Oslo produces around 20 dietitians yearly, but in 2010 we have the potential to increase to 40 dietitians due to the University of Bergen graduating their first class this year.

Our title as clinical dietitian is protected, and to practice in a hospital you need to



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be authorized by the Norwegian Registration Authority for Health Personnel.

The starting salary for clinical dietitians in the hospital are around 50,480 Euro, a midrange paid dietitian earns around 55,405 Euro, and a higher range around (not a PhD) 61,560 Euro a year. It is important to note that we pay almost 40% taxes. Our association belongs to a union, and is able to negotiate locally every year and the average wage increase ranges from 2-6% yearly.

We do continuing education and life long learning, - including annual conferences (including the general meeting) and a week long conference every other year, on a topic of interest. This conference is organized by a voluntary group appointed by the board (KEFF).

The field of dietetics' work is in all areas, as with the rest of the world, obesity is an area of interest along with under-nutrition, diabetes and heart disease.

I am Sissel Urke Olsen, 40 years old, and took my education in USA, Illinois, at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, in the Nutrition department. I have a Master degree in Community and clinical nutrition; I also became a registered dietitian (RD) through an exam that covered all subjects the past 6 years, the title RD is protected in the USA.

After my master degree, I was hired as an RD in New Mexico, Las Cruises. I worked

in both medical and surgical wards, intensive care and pediatric wards.

In 1998 I moved to Kristiansand, Norway. I worked at the local hospital, serving both primary and secondary care (hospital and the community). It is still not unusual to serve a 200 bed hospital alone as a dietitian, along with taking referrals from medical doctors in the community.

From 2002 until the present time I have been employed by Diakonhjemmet Sykehus, which is located in the capital, Oslo. The hospital population has a very high average age (85years). This has enabled me to become more of an expert in geriatric nutrition, and under-nutrition is a field of great interest. The three dietitians in our hospital work in interdisciplinary

teams. Working in teams enables us to have a more holistic approach and be more patient centered.

Our profession is in constant change and our future goals are that there will be dietitians (clinical, community and administrative) working on all levels.

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