

Community Pharmacy Practice in Norway



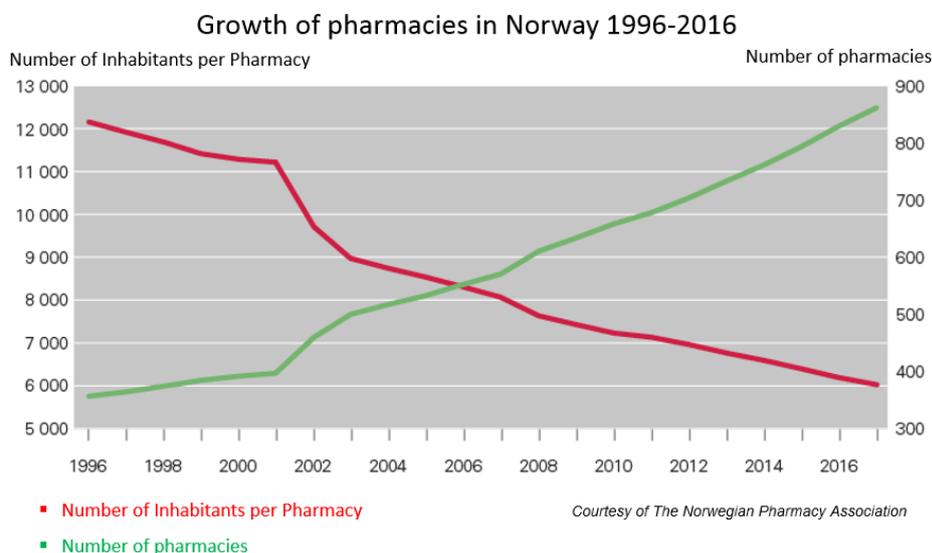
*Contributed by:
Cand.pharm. Rønnaug Larsen,
President, The Norwegian
Association of Pharmacists*

Norwegian facts

- Kingdom with parliamentary democracy.
- Population of 5,26 Millions (January 2017)
- Nordic welfare model with universal health care and comprehensive social security system
- Prescription-only-medicines to consumers only available from the pharmacies.
- Most over-the-counter-medicines are available out of pharmacies.
- Pharmacies' total turnover 32,9 Billions (2016)
- 80% of the prescriptions are e-prescriptions
- The Norwegian word for pharmacy is *apotek*
- To work as a pharmacist in a pharmacy Norwegian authorisation or license is required

Growth of pharmacies in Norway

Since 2001 there has been a rapid growth of pharmacies in Norway. This due to a change in legislation that allowed other than trained pharmacists to own pharmacies, and the possibilities of making pharmacy chains. In November 2017 there are 895 pharmacies in Norway, but the numbers are still growing.



Community pharmacy owners

All community pharmacies are privately owned. Most of them belong to chains. The 3 largest chains are linked to their own pharmaceutical wholesaler and have international owners

Pharmacy chain	Number of pharmacies	Wholesaler	Owner
 APOTEK 1	360	Apokjeden distribusjon AS	Apotek1Group that belongs to german Phoenix Group
 vitusapotek+	253	NMD	NMD that belongs to american McKesson Corporation.
 Boots apotek	158	Alliance Healthcare Norge AS	Boots Norge that belongs to american Walgreens Boots Alliance
 ditt apotek	69	NMD	Collaboration of independent owners

In addition to the independent owners of «ditt apotek» there are 23 «chain-free» independent pharmacy owners.

30 of the 32 hospital pharmacies in Norway belongs to public sector and 2 are owned by private hospital foundations.



Typical entrance of a chain pharmacy situated in a shopping mall (photo taken by Stein Sjølie)



The entrance of the independent pharmacy Maura Apotek

Pharmacy staff

There are about 8600 pharmacy workers in Norway (2016) and 88 % of them are women.

In general the pharmacy workers are health professionals. About 3700 of them are pharmacists (both MPharm and BPharm) and 3450 are pharmacy technicians. Only pharmacists are allowed to dispense medicine and thus a pharmacist must be present at all times in the pharmacy to keep the doors open.

To run a pharmacy the manager must be Cand.pharm or MPharm



Independent pharmacy owner and manager of Maura Apotek, Hanne Andresen, showing her carousel of often sold prescription-only-drugs. The same type of carousel that almost all Norwegian pharmacies have.



Hanne Andresen behind the counter greeting a prescription customer (not seen).

Pharmaceutical pricing system

The Norwegian Medicines Agency (NoMA) is responsible for setting maximum prices on prescription-only-medicines. The Agency also evaluates and decides whether a medicine should be reimbursed by the National Insurance Scheme. Because NoMA only set the maximum price prices can vary amongst the different (chain) pharmacies. The prices of veterinary and over-the-counter medicines are not regulated. There is a 25% VAT on all medicines. The National Insurance Scheme provides reimbursement for medicines, and pharmacies are, with some exceptions, obliged to dispense the cheapest product within a substitutional group.

Community pharmacy services

Most community pharmacies have relatively large self-picking areas with a wide range of over-the-counter-medicines, first aid equipment, skin and hair care products, dietary supplements, herbal products, some cosmetics and such. About 76,9 % of the turnover (2016) comes from sale of medicines.

In addition to dispensing, providing counselling and giving drug advice the pharmacies offers a wide range of services such as:

- *Checking inhaler technique* (from 2016)
- *Medicine start* (from 2018)
- *Multi dose packing*
- *Stop smoking guidance*
- *Blood sugar, Blood pressure and Cholesterol measurements*
- *Mole scanning*
- *Check up for diabetes or bowel cancer*
- *Chlamydia testing*
- *Immunization* (pilot project)

The services may vary from (chain) pharmacy to (chain) pharmacy, but *Checking inhaler technique* and *Medicine start* are services paid for by The National Insurance Scheme and should thus be available in every pharmacy.

Checking inhaler technique was introduced as a remunerated service in 2016, and *Medicine start* will be introduced in 2018. *Medicine start* consists of two follow-up consultations with a pharmacist. The first at 1-2 weeks and the second at 3-5 weeks after start of the new medicine. It is based on research showing that problems with newly prescribed medicines appear rapidly and that a significant portion of patients quickly becomes non-adherent.

The pharmacy margins of pharmaceuticals are relatively low and in order to make use of the pharmacy staff knowledge more pharmaceutical services are likely to be introduced in the future.

The chains are also trying out other services as skin care salons in the pharmacy and ear piercing.



*Typical inside of a chain pharmacy situated in a shopping mall (photo taken by Stein Sjølie)
Cake only (to the left in the picture) because of this is the opening day.*



*Typical inside of a chain pharmacy situated in a shopping mall (photo taken by Stein Sjølie)
Prescription customers waiting while their prescriptions are being dispensed.*

Online pharmacies

From 2016 Norwegian online pharmacies are allowed to sell prescription-only-medicines. The chains Vitusapotek and Apotek1 have established their own online pharmacies to offer their customers the multichannel experience, but the largest online pharmacy  **KOMPLETT**apotek.no is independent. The online turnover is still believed to be quite low, but increasing and no one knows how this will turn out in the future.