

# Important events and changes affecting pharmacists' work in Norway 2017

The Association's new president



Rønnaug Larsen took over as president of The Norwegian Association of Pharmacists (NFF) on January 1st. Tove Ytterbø stepped down after eight years as president.

## Upcoming parliamentary election

Parliamentary elections will be held in Norway in September 2017, after four years of Erna Solbergs government (a minority government with ministers from the Conservative Party, the Progress Party, and with parliamentary support from the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party).

Minister of Health and Care Services Bent Høie (Conservative Party) has headed "Patients' Health Services" since January 2014. Høie's objectives include ensuring that patients are central, a reduction of waiting times, an increase in quality, and increasing the availability of medicines and healthcare services.



Sveinung Stensland (pharmacist, former pharmacy manager) sits on the Standing Committee on Health and Care Services as the politician for the Conservative Party, and has been successful in areas of importance to pharmacists, such as an increased number of seats for pharmacy students. At the end of June 2017, he advocated in favor of introducing vaccination in pharmacies.



## Notable white papers – what happens after the election?

In 2016-2017, the government produced and delivered several important white papers, including:

- Policy on Pharmaceuticals – **“Correct Usage, Better Health”**: the first since 2008, and a comprehensive review of the policy on pharmaceuticals in Norway.
- Policy on Prioritizing – **“Values in Patient Health Services”**: the first in 19 years, establishes that criteria for benefits, resources, and severity must be the basis of all prioritizing in health services.
- **Plan of Action for Antibiotic Resistance in Health Services**: with a goal of reducing antibiotic use by 30% by the end of 2020.

*How these will be followed up in 2017 will be dependent on the outcome of the parliamentary election.*



## Introduction of Norwegian online pharmacies

For a long time it has been possible to order non-prescription drugs and merchandise from Norwegian online pharmacies. As of October 19, 2017, it was also possible to order prescription drugs from online pharmacies. As of that date, it was no longer legal to order prescription drugs from foreign online pharmacies.

Norwegian online pharmacies must be approved and registered with the Norwegian Medicines Agency, and must comply with the same regulations as ordinary pharmacies. Big pharmacy chains have, with the exception of Boots, established their own online pharmacy solutions. They view online pharmacies as a compliment to, rather than competitors of physical pharmacies. In addition to Apotek 1 and Vitus Apotek, the Komplet Group – the Nordic region’s largest online retailer – has established Komplet Apotek.no.

*What significance this will have for ordinary pharmacies will depend on Norwegian consumers’ use of online pharmacies.*

### Introduction of remunerated patient care services in pharmacies

The government has made cuts in pharmacy profits, while simultaneously introducing, as a trial, instruction in the proper use of inhalers as a remunerated patient care service in pharmacies.



This autumn, the Ministry of Health and Care Services will decide whether the following two patient care services in pharmacies will be introduced as remunerated services:

- Instruction on the correct use of inhalers:  
<http://www.apotek.no/inhalasjonsveiledning>
- Instruction at the initiation of drug treatment:  
<http://www.farmatid.no/artikler/nyheter/forste-steg-mot-oppstartsveiledning>

*A decision is expected in conjunction with the revised state budget this autumn, regardless of the outcome of the parliamentary elections.*

### Introduction of risk minimization measures for non-prescription drugs

«Pharmacist only medicines» has been a disputed topic during the last year. By introducing mandatory medication-specific guidance at the point of sale in the pharmacy «prescription only medicines» can be re-registered to «non-prescription medicines». Additionally, «non-prescription medicines» that may be considered to be re-registered to «prescription only medicines», may continue to be «non-prescription medicines».

A green paper published just before summer by the Norwegian Medicines Agency suggests that such measures may not necessarily have to be taken care of by pharmacists, and therefore introduced the term “risk minimization measures” instead of «Pharmacist only medication».

Which medicines to be included in this arrangement are yet to be decided, and the Norwegian Medicines Agency indicated in the green paper that the pharmaceutical industry decides themselves to apply as a part of the marketing authorisation for the medicine.

*The case will be settled this fall.*

## Introduction of confidential pricing of medicines/undisclosed trade pricing

Trade pricing of medicines has been public for over 20 years, but this was changed in March 2016 after a bureaucratic restructuring. The new procurement authority believed that prices should be regarded as trade secrets and be protected by confidentiality agreements according to the Public Administration Act.

This confidentiality policy met with massive professional resistance from NFF, the Norwegian Directorate for Health, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, the Norwegian Medical Association, and the Norwegian Medicines Agency, among others. Despite this, it was agreed in February 2017 that prices would be kept confidential. A working group has now been appointed to develop new routines that are adapted to "an ordinary hospital day and the practical delivery of drugs in pharmacies." The group had its first meeting June 13<sup>th</sup>.

*New routines must be introduced in all pharmacies related to whom and in which cases information on medicine pricing may be disclosed.*

## Important events arranged by or participated in by NFF

### AGAINST ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

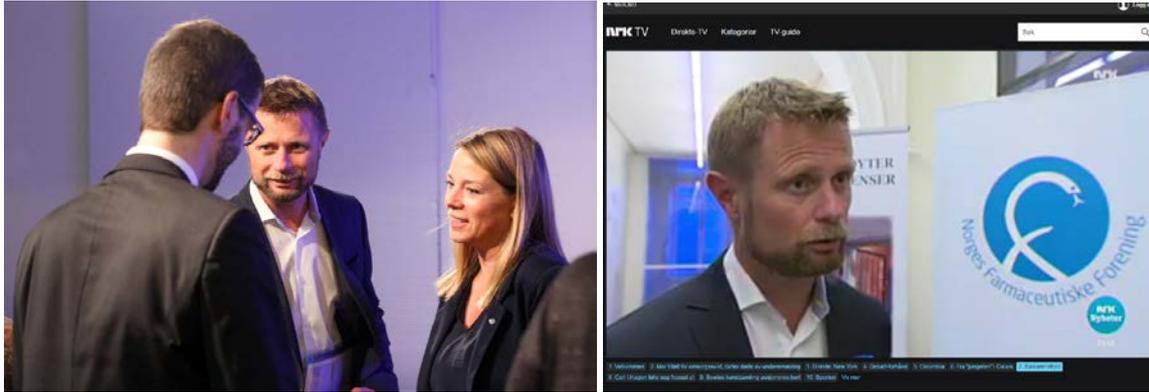
#### *World Pharmacists' Day*

Pharmacists in NFF have contributed to the government's Action Plan for Antibiotic Resistance in health services, and followed up on their focus on resistance issues on World Pharmacists' Day on September 26, 2016. The theme for this year's meeting was "*Antibiotic Resistance – Are we approaching a post-antibiotic era?*"

Over 120 attendees came to hear Minister of Health Bent Høie and Secretary General of FIP Luc Besançon speak. The meeting was arranged in collaboration with Pharmacists Without Borders (FUG Norway).

The Minister of Health arrived directly from the UN General Assembly, where antibiotic resistance and the implementation of a global action plan against antibiotic resistance were on the agenda.

The event received good media coverage.



### Meeting with associations authorized to prescribe

Pharmacists in NFF invited the Norwegian Medical Association, the Norwegian Dental Association, and the Norwegian Veterinary Association to a workshop on September 27, 2016. The meeting's theme was interaction in the fight against antibiotic resistance and ways in which different health professions can cooperate in reaching National Action Plan goals. Luc Besançon, Secretary General of FIP, spoke about the challenges associated with international resistance problems, explaining how FIP works against antibiotic resistance, locally and globally. The workshop laid a good foundation for further cooperation.

### The Clostebol case

In October 2016, when traces of Clostebol (a weak anabolic steroid on the doping list) were found in cross-country skier Therese Johaug's doping test, NFF's leadership was contacted by several news agencies. During altitude training in Italy, Johaug sought help for a sunburned lip from the National Team's doctor, who purchased Trofodermin ointment at a local pharmacy. The ointment was labeled with a warning that the drug contained an active ingredient found on the doping list. Tove Ytterbø, head of NFF, was asked about Clostebol and whether the choice of the active ingredient/preparation was defensible from a clinical point of view. Tove participated in a live television broadcast as well as several radio and television news broadcasts in connection with the case. Since this event, a pharmacist has been hired by Antidoping Norway.

### PHARMACIST OF THE YEAR 2016

Prior to the meeting on World Pharmacy Day, the prize for Pharmacist of the Year was awarded to Professor Hedvig Nordeng who, through her longtime research, has focused on safe drug treatments for children and pregnant and nursing women. Her research has gained international attention.

### PHARMACY MANAGERS' DAY 2016

As part of the association's increased commitment to pharmacists, Pharmacy managers' Day was arranged on September 8th, with 40 participants attending. Pharmacy managers are important to the association as a whole, especially with regard to the development of

comprehensive pharmacy policy. Pharmacy managers’ Day will be an annual event. The need for a neutral meeting place for different pharmacy chains offering professional talks and opportunities to exchange experiences was mentioned in feedback from participants.

*«PHARMACIST ONLY MEDICATION» (Risk minimization measures for non-prescription medicines)*

On March 8th, NFF participated with other members of the health sector in a discussion about «Pharmacist only medication». NFF emphasized that, if the term «Pharmacist only medication» was going to be used, this could only be performed by pharmacists, and furthermore that a broad public health perspective was missing when the industry itself is asked to apply for medicines to the risk minimization program.

<http://www.farmatid.no/artikler/temamote-om-farmasoytutlevering-hadde-forventet-noe-mer-konkret>

*TRADE UNION CONFERENCE 2017 – “PHARMACY OF THE FUTURE”*

NFF held its first trade union conference on March 20th-21st. About 40 participants filled the hall both days. There were contributions at the conference from employers, trade organizations, and association representatives, as well as professional talks. The conference included a section open to all members, and a section reserved for association representatives. <http://www.farmaceutene.no/tariffkonferansen-trakk-full-sal>

**Membership numbers and general developments**

There were 3,688 members as of January 2, 2017. This represents an increase of 265 members compared with the previous year. In 2015, membership grew by 131 members. The number of student members has grown by 104, while the number of retired members has declined by 13. Total membership growth in 2016 was 7.1%.

*Authorized pharmacists*

As of December 31, 2016, numbers from the Norwegian Registration Authority for Health Personnel showed that there are a total of 6,561 authorized pharmacists, of which 3,976 were administrative pharmacists with masters degrees and 2,585 were pharmacists with bachelors degrees. 406 new authorizations were issued in 2016. A total of 4,653 were educated in Norway, which is to say that 29% of pharmacists in Norway were trained abroad. The majority of pharmacists with foreign educations come from Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Serbia, and Portugal. Authorization expires at the age of 80.

Member growth from 2013-January 1, 2017

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
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Masters degree	1480	1544	1576	1618	1782
Bachelors degree	1200	1179	1176	1168	1178
Students	213	188	253	335	439
Retired	242	270	285	300	287
Other	2	2	2	2	2
Total	3137	3183	3292	3423	3688
NFF-A*	1792	1800	1829	1823	1935
NFF-F*	467	487	495	499	546
NFF-O	173	171	178	179	193
NFF-P	155	151	155	160	162
NFF-D*	284	277	278	298	364
Other	95	116	97	127	126
Total number currently employed	2682	2725	2754	2788	2962

### Member benefits

Over the last year, NFF has continued to work to establish new — and to improve existing — member benefits (see the June 2017 screen shot below from our website).

## Medlemsfordeler



Som medlem av Norges Farmaceutiske Forening får du tilgang til en rekke medlemsfordeler.

### Samarbeidspartnere:

- Bank (Danske Bank)
- BSU-kampanje (Danske Bank)
- Forsikring (Codan)
- Studentforsikring (gjennom Danske Bank)
- Advokathjelp til annet enn jobb? (Bull & Co)
- Bilkjøp (Bertel O. Steen)
- Gravferdstjenester (Fonus)
- Hotell (Nordic Choice Hotels og Thon Hotels)
- Reisebyrå (Berg-Hansen)
- Strøm (Fjordkraft)
- Sykkel, sykkelustyr og fitnessprodukter (Merida Store)
- Brilller (Brilleland)
- Bistand til apotekere (Bedriftsforbundet)
- Sko til jobb og fritid (Birkenstock by Bjelland)

### Øvrige medlemsfordeler:

- Bistand til lønnsforhandlinger
- Interessepolitikk
- Jobbsøkerkurs for studentmedlemmer
- Juridisk bistand
- Landsdekkende tillitsvalgtsapparat
- Legater og stipender
- Lønnsstatistikk
- Norsk Farmaceutisk Tidsskrift
- Publisering av forskning, doktoravhandling, masteroppgave og bacheloroppgave
- Gruppelivsforsikring for apotek i Virke
- Bistand hos våre søsterforeninger i Norden
- Forbrukerøkonomi - Råd fra Danske Bank

### Activities for increased member recruiting

Cathrine Klerck will be employed as student- and recruiting-coordinator until March 2018. The Association has had several recruitment campaigns throughout the year. Monthly campaigns

have been held in which all who signed up received scratchcards or thermal cups with the NFF logo. Winners names were published in the Norwegian Pharmaceutical Journal.

## Students

A separate board in NFF's student membership was finally established on October 11, 2016. Student representatives from different schools were invited to Oslo for the kick-off. The day began with a business visit to Fresenius Kabi in Halden, and ended with ratification of the student members' new board in the afternoon.

### *Lab coats for new student members*

During fall 2016, we expanded the offer of lab coats to new pharmacy students who applied for membership in the association to include all pharmacy schools. The offer proved to be very popular, and led to the recruitment of many new student members.

### *Job search course and introduction course*

Both introduction and job search courses have been held at all school locations except NTNU in Trondheim. Altogether, about 200 students have participated in the courses throughout the year. Introduction courses are open to both members and non-members. These were held during the fall, as close as possible to the beginning of studies. An introduction to the association, member benefits, and a taste of the job search course were among the topics taken up during these courses.

Job search courses are held in the new year, and are reserved for members. Review of employment agreements, current regulations, and job search tips are among the topics covered by the courses.

### *Student visits to companies*

The association arranged several business visits for pharmacy students. In August and October, students visited Vistin Pharma in Kragerø and Fresenius Kabi in Halden, respectively. Common to both of these companies is that they represent a few pharmaceutical companies that have production in Norway. In addition to painkillers for the Norwegian market, Vistin also produces metformin and codeine phosphate for the global market.

### *Establishment of a principal agreement with the Federation of Norwegian Industries (NHO)*

Toward the end of 2016, NFF established a principal agreement with the Federation of Norwegian Industries (NHO). This means that NFF members who are employed by businesses within NHO can require agreements and enter into formalized dialogue with their employers as a part of wage settlements.

Initially, NFF will petition for an agreement with Komplet Apotek, but we assume that members of other NHO companies will also follow up.

### *Social media*

NFF made a clear commitment to Facebook throughout 2016 and, by the end of that year, had 2,600 followers on its Facebook page. This is the result of posting articles and videos more frequently, and posting updates on events attended by NFF employees and representatives.

The association is also on Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

## Salary growth

### *Wage settlement 2016*

The wage settlement was strongly influenced by pressures on the Norwegian economy, resulting in an official framework for annual salary growth of 2.4%. With inflation at about 2.5-2.6%, this means that the average Norwegian has actually experienced a decrease in buying power or net salary. Settlements that NFF have been involved in have generally ended within the framework set by the preliminary (national) negotiations.

## Education and training

### *Increased student capacity in pharmacy education*

NFF, the Norwegian Pharmacy Association, and the Association of Pharmaceutical Industry have worked together to influence politicians, directorates, and ministries in an effort to increase the capacity for pharmacy education in Norway. Measures focused on including an increased number of seats and increased numbers of fully funded seats for pharmacy students. Pharmacy studies in Bergen have been the main focus.

### *Increased number of courses and participation of association representatives*

NFF held many more courses in 2016 than in 2015. In all, just under 250 members and association representatives attended courses in 2016.

A series of different courses were arranged in 2016 in which courses for association representatives were the best attended.

## The job market

### *Pharmacies*

The number of pharmacies in Norway continues to grow. As of December 13, 2016, there were 868 pharmacies, of which 32 were hospital pharmacies. There are many open positions in private pharmacies and, every month, from 65 to 80 positions are listed in the Norwegian Pharmaceutical Journal (NFT).

### *Hospitals*

Pharmaceutical services are increasingly sought after by different departments in hospitals. Pharmaceutical services in hospitals are mainly carried out by pharmacists employed in hospital pharmacies.

### *Industry*

Downsizing has resulted in the industry's employing fewer people, but there is still a need for pharmacists in the industry, for example, as Qualified Persons (QP). There has also been an increase in small start-up companies, and in industry contract research organizations (CROs).

### *Government agencies*

The Norwegian Medicines Agency, the Norwegian Directorate of Health (with HELFO, The Norwegian Health Economics Administration), and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health are the major governmental workplaces for pharmacists in Norway. A total of 126 NFF members are employed by these agencies.

*The Norwegian Medicines Agency* moved to new premises at Helsfyr in December 2016. Additionally, a new strategy was created and a comprehensive reorganization was carried out. None of the approximately 250 people employed by the agency—many pharmacists among them—were affected by the downsizing.

*The Norwegian Directorate of Health* works with HELFO as its external agency. The Directorate for e-health was established on January 1, 2016. This new directorate was founded on the basis of the old electronic health division within the Health Directorate. The Health Directorate was downsized by 50 positions in 2016.

The Institute of Public Health was downsized by 60 positions in 2016.

### *Municipal pharmacists*

Several municipalities have employed their own pharmacists, including Trondheim, Stavanger, Drammen, Ullensaker, Oslo, and Tromsø. Other municipalities hire pharmacists for part-time positions or for specific engagements.

The network of municipal pharmacists was restored in the autumn of 2016. A network gathering was held in the first half of 2017.

For many years, NFF has worked toward the employment of more municipal pharmacists, and there is now finally a clearly defined political goal in favor of this.

The Medicines Report of 2015 reports that the employment of municipal pharmacists by municipalities has achieved good results.

## Employed Community Pharmacists in Europe (EPheU)

In December 2015, the central board voted in favor of NFF applying for membership in the EPheU. The application for membership was sent in February 2016, and NFF was granted membership at the general meeting in Vienna in September 2016.

EPheU is the only European organization that safeguards pharmacists' interests. EPheU is also the only organization at the European level to act as a trade association in addition to being a mouthpiece for pharmaceutical expertise. Furthermore, the organization participates in current legislation in the EU. Through its membership in The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), they have also been early participants in the work of various EU directives, and are heard as a formal party in these processes.

Greta Torbergson was elected to EPheU's Executive Board at the General Assembly on September 23rd.

## Norwegian Pharmaceutical Journal (NFT)

The Norwegian Pharmaceutical Journal (NFT) is a scientific journal approved by The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR), which publishes news, research, and trends about medicines and their role in society.



## Reader survey

NFT's editors sent out a Questback survey to NFF members in October 2016, with a response rate of 24.9%. As with previous survey feedback, respondents wanted to see more professional content. Other feedback showed that nearly 85% of NFF members view NFT as an important or very important member benefit, and about 83% believe that NFT contributes to strengthening NFF as an organization. The results of the reader survey were published in issue No. 1/2017.

## *Changes in the journal's layout*

Changes in layout were most visible on the cover, page three, and on the NFF pages. Linn Brændhaugen, NFT's own graphic designer, is responsible for this work, and we are very pleased with the more modern look she has given the magazine.

## *New column on categories of therapies*

An information page about different categories of therapies was introduced as a separate column beginning with issue No. 1/2017. During the first half of 2017, the topics of asthma, rheumatic disease, diabetes, drugs for children and insomnia were presented. The goal of the column is to provide concise information on what pharmacists should know in order to advise customers and patients. The column was well received by readers.

## *NFT on Facebook*

In mid-May 2017, NFT finally created its own Facebook page, hoping to draw more traffic to our website, [www.farmatid.no](http://www.farmatid.no), and to have more direct contact with readers. The Facebook page is still so new that we are still learning how to use it to its full potential, but have begun to attract a number of followers.

## *Editorial committee and professional editorial group*

NFT has a good working relationship with both the editorial committee and the professional editorial group. The editorial committee, which is made up of eight pharmacists from a wide range of pharmaceutical settings, had two meetings during the last half of 2016 and two during the first half of 2017.

The committee contributes tips on news items, reports, interviews, and the like. The professional editorial group, which is made up of eight pharmacists, chiefly from universities and colleges, contributes to NFT with scientific articles and peer reviews.

The professional editorial group had one meeting during the autumn of 2016, and one during the spring of 2017. Four scientific articles were published during the last half of 2016 and the first half of 2017. NFT has been indexed in SweMed+, a database for Nordic medical articles, since 2010.