

0. Foreword

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Internationally Scandinavia is the most used term to describe the region of Northern Europe from where this report originates. It was used by the Roman historian Tacitus in his monograph on Germania. Unfortunately Scandinavia is internationally as poorly defined as many of the concepts and terms that are used in publications on *Analytical Quality Specifications*. To start with the definition of *Scandinavia* it can in a restricted meaning refer to the Scandinavian peninsula - Norway and Sweden - but will in this report be widened and include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Greenland, and the Faeroe islands. The peoples of these countries share a similar history and culture and have a Scandinavian language as their official language or one of two official languages. In this report the word 'Nordic' is considered to be synonymous with 'Scandinavian'.

The Nordic Clinical Chemistry (NORDKEM) Project was started in 1977. It was after an application from the Scandinavian Society for Clinical Chemistry approved by the Nordic Council of Ministers to promote the quality of the performance in hospital laboratories in the Nordic countries. From the beginning of 1983 the financial responsibility was turned over from the Nordic Council of Ministers to the national health authorities and hospital communes of the five Nordic countries. During the last years there has been a successive trend to broaden the ambition of improvement of clinical chemistry to improvement of laboratory medicine in general.

The major motivation for Scandinavian cooperation in the improvement of quality and management of clinical laboratories are the similarities in scientific background, staff education and training, and health care and hospital organization which makes it possible to work together to find good solutions and also to implement the new suggestions without too many difficulties.

The NORDKEM project to be reported in this issue of the Upsala Journal of Medical Sciences is a continuation of the "kick off" seminar which was also documented in the same Journal (1), under the name of "the Friibergh Herrgård Seminar, two years ago. The project has the title: Medical Need for Quality Specifications in Laboratory Medicine. It will be obvious from this report and its references that this is a "hot topic". We in the project committee express our gratitude to the Board of NORDKEM for advice, suggestions, and criticism during the framing of the project plans and for financial support during the three year long project time. A grant from NORDKEM is also gratefully acknowledged, which allowed us to organize a course on the same topic for 22 participants at Hvanneyri in Iceland prior to the XXIII Nordic Congress in Clinical Chemistry in Reykjavík in August 1992.

REFERENCES

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