



# STUDY SUPPORT

## DENMARK MEDICAL PART





## **II. HEALTH CARE**

### **1. DESCRIPTION OF THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN DENMARK**

#### **✓ TYPE OF HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

The health care system in Denmark is not unique, and at the ranking list of Lancet, rated as number 19 in the world. Right now, the health system is undergoing a huge transformation. Bigger and bigger hospitals become more and more specialised, with much fewer hospital beds, than the hospitals these new hospitals are replacing. This means that more and more treatment is moved to the primary sector, upgrading nurses and other staff groups' competences and ability to perform more and more different treatments. More will be handled by telemedicine, robots, and shortening the number of days at hospital.

#### **✓ THE SUBJECTS OF THE HEALTH SYSTEM**

The subject of the health system is to provide the best quality of all kinds of treatments, and care for all citizens in Denmark, delivered by very an educated and skilled health staff.

But as it is a publicly financed system – the health system is very much involved in health promotion. Lack of health is very much considered as a challenge for the educational system. This means, on one hand, that it is a normal part of training health professionals, to also train them to be able to educate groups and individual citizens in health promotion. On the other hand, it is a normal part of primary school and youth education, to educate and train children, youth, and by other means citizens in general, in what improves, and what doesn't improve, a healthy life.

### ✓ PHILOSOPHY / IDEA / PRINCIPLES

It is a principle in Denmark that all citizens shall have the same treatment, and the care they need, for free. Equality in access to health and care, no matter your socioeconomic status, is a very basic principle and approach in Denmark.

### ✓ FINANCING SYSTEM

- ✓ Overall, all healthcare is free in Denmark, and is paid by the tax system.
- ✓ However, there are a few areas where people have to pay a little themselves. This fact has created a user owned insurance company named “danmark”. More than 2 million have signed up for this insurance.
- ✓ Many people in the labour market, also have a health insurance paid by their employer. It secures, that these covered people can go to private hospitals if there is a waiting list at public hospitals.

### ✓ RANGE OF PROVIDED HEALTH CARE

All people staying in Denmark has free access to treatment at GPs, at hospitals, and services from homecare, and care for disabled. It covers all kinds of treatment and services, except that citizens have to pay partly for the services at the dentist after age 18. Up to age 18 it is free. People have to pay for eyeglasses up to a certain level but can have a hearing aid for free. No one can explain why we have this difference in view of these two challenges. People have to pay the first set annual amount for medicine, and after passing this set limit, the cost for people have to pay themselves, will be less and less over time. To chronically ill people, this means they will easily pass this limit and then will have medicine more or less for free, or, at least, heavily supported.



## 2. THE TERMS OF HEALTH, DISEASE, PREVENTION IN DENMARK

### ✓ VALUE ORIENTATION OF THE DANISH POPULATION

Healthcare is among the most valued things in Denmark, and the second highest budget item in the national budget – second only to pension for senior citizens.

### ✓ PERCEPTION OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS

There is a huge public focus on health and health promotion in Denmark as the result of the fact that the opposite has to be paid by the public.

Even though there is this huge focus, the population seems to be divided more and more in two different fractions. One half of the population, who become more and more healthy, and the other half becoming in more and more bad health conditions. At the end of 2018, the national health authorities published studies, saying that half the population were overweight as one factor.

### ✓ PREVENTION SYSTEM IN DENMARK

Preventive measures and health promotion in Denmark, is included more or less in all parts of life in Denmark.

Prevention starts with vaccination programs and education of the parents, followed by health initiatives in kindergarten, and different educational initiatives during the primary school and youth education. Denmark has one of the most restricted legislations when it comes to safe and healthy work environments, and a huge scale of health preventive efforts to inhabitants over the age of 65.



### 3. ORGANIZATION OF THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

#### ✓ TYPES OF HEALTH CARE

The overwhelming majority of healthcare facilities and services are offered and operated by public authorities. Paid for over taxes, and by that, free. However, there are private hospitals and care companies people can attend if they want, and the payment will then depend on what the issue is. It can be publicly paid, and in some cases, people will have to pay themselves.

#### ✓ CHARACTERISTICS

The gateway to the Danish health system, is the GP. All people who are citizens, and by that having a CPR no. and a health insurance card, are connected to their private GP. If further treatment is recommended by the GP, people will have the treatment for free. People are of course allowed to look up some treatment at specialists by themselves, but they will then have to pay themselves.

Going to hospital will, for many, go through the GP and there is a 24/7 covering.

However, people can attend the emergency facilities by calling the alarm number, and being referred directly to the emergency department, either by the GP or by calling the alarm number, to be picked up by ambulance. The emergency and rescue service is based on the pre-hospital system, which means the staff at ambulances are so well trained, that the treatment can begin already in the ambulances, guided online by doctors from the hospital the ambulance is heading for.



**Pharmacy services** provide medicines and medical devices on the basis of a medical prescription from the GP or specialist. However, the reform of the medical regulation a few years ago changed and that legalised quite a huge number of medical products, and now a days more and more over the counter medicine can be bought in ordinary shops –mostly supermarkets.

## 4. HOME CARE

### ✓ CHARACTERISTICS OF HOME CARE IN DENMARK

Homecare of elderly and disabled people is free to all people. A person in need of care will have to be evaluated by a set committee at the municipality, and once accepted the person can decide whether the person will have the service delivered by the municipality home service, or by a private operator – but still paid by the public.

### ✓ TASKS OF HOME CARE IN DENMARK

There is no limit for how much care (hours) a person can receive during a day. It can be all kinds of practical support, from support to being washed and dressed, to cooking and cleaning. It can also be treatment of skin defects and wounds, help to administrate medicine, rehabilitation and general counselling about life affairs and issues.



## ✓ CONTENT OF HOME CARE

Basically, homecare is divided into practical support and care/nursery support.

One reason why some citizens in need of care prefer to use private companies, is that these private companies are allowed to offer and sell supplementary services such as washing windows, gardening, cooking help when having guests and so on.

## ✓ HOSPICE HOME CARE

Palliative care in people's own home, and care of dying people, is an integrated part of the homecare nursery services, and staff is also trained in taking care of relatives and families and to react for further specialized help and support if needed. The municipalities have after care offers to people who have lost an important person in their life, but it is basically not a part of the homecare. Hospice in Denmark is relatively new as an offer within the health system. Right now, there are 19 hospices spread all over Denmark and one of these is a child hospice.

# 5. AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH CARE

## ✓ TIME AVAILABILITY

With many different treatments at hospitals, the state has set a time limit on how quick the citizens shall receive the treatment. If the local hospital can't deliver according to this set time limit, the citizen is allowed to go for any other public hospital or a private hospital. In the same way there is established a timeline for how quickly an ambulance shall be at the emergency address after an alarm call has been received.

Home care can, and shall, be delivered from day to day.





### ✓ LOCAL / GEOGRAPHIC ACCESSIBILITY

All areas in Denmark have quick access to hospitals, even though Denmark have fewer and fewer hospitals. If it is needed to be faster than the time car ambulances can offer, regions use helicopters more and more often. In the same way, it is a national aim, that all citizens should have their GP in their local neighborhood. This is a challenge in Denmark right now, due to a lack of doctors. This means, that for more and more people in the outskirts and rural areas, the geographic accessibility has become more and more challenged.

### ✓ FINANCIAL AVAILABILITY

(SEE HEALTHCARE FINANCING)

As stated earlier, all treatment and care are free in Denmark. As a retired person of low income (perhaps only the state pension), seniors will have a medicine card, which allow them financial support for medicine and personal aid. The same counts for low income families with children.

Basically, all people in Denmark will have the medicine they need.

## 6. NURSING CARE SYSTEM IN DENMARK

### ✓ THE POSITION OF THE NURSING PROFESSION

Nursing is a separate scientific discipline in Denmark, as in most countries, and when it comes to hospitals and care institutions, nurses are under their own management. Nurses are not subordinate to doctors in their daily work and when performing their nursing activities. In general, a hospital has a leading doctor and a leading nurse.

Nurses are important, and they are employed everywhere, where





health is an issue. They are connected to kindergardens, in primary schools, promoting health in eldercare, at units taking care of worksecurity at jobs, and of course in all the normal kind of jobs. In general, the competences and the complexity of tasks to be solved by nurses are increasing, and nurses are taking over more and more tasks that, until only a few years ago, were solved by doctors.

## THE CURRENT CONCEPT OF NURSING CARE

All nurses, and other care givers, are educated to work by *the nursing process method, also named the “problem solving approach”*.

However, it is not possible to describe a precise concept. The used methods are very much developed locally and adapted to the daily challenges and tasks to be solved.

## SYSTEMS OF PROVIDING NURSING CARE

The nursing and care system in Denmark is divided into 3 different levels, covered by different levels of education and professionals.

- Level 1: **Elementary care and nursery**

covered by Social and health helpers

- Level 2: **Basic Care and nursery**

covered by Social and Health Assistants (medical staff)

- Level 3: **Advanced Care and nursery**

Covered by nurses.

A person providing care and nursery services may be working as a primary nurse and contact nurse to some clients/patients, and be a part of a group care system to other clients/patients.



## 7. SPIRITUAL CARE IN DENMARK

### ✓ CHARACTERISTICS AND STARTING POINTS OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH CARE IN DENMARK.

All 3 different levels of nursery staff presented before, is educated to meet, take care and take action, if and when, citizens show a need for spiritual care.

It is considered to be a need that staff have to meet as any other need they identify in a citizen.

### ✓ LEGISLATION

There is no special legislation saying anything about spiritual care. Still, people are secured by law against discrimination, to keep the fundamental right to be a believer of any religion or faith, people feel they belong to.

The national health authorities have published a guideline for nursery and care staff in Denmark, pointing out how to meet needs of spiritual care and how to act in the best way.

### ✓ SPECIFIC CONTENT OF SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS CARE

Bigger hospitals have employed their own priests, and in general all head of religions have free access to meet their believers at hospitals. Most churches placed close to nursing homes, arrange different services at the nursing homes. Seniors who can't manage to come to church by themselves, are offered to be taken by taxis to the local church to take part in ordinary church services.



## 8. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF A PATIENT IN DENMARK

### ✓ RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF INSURED PERSONS

The Health Act's rules on patients' legal status ensure the individual patient's legal certainty in connection with examination, treatment and care within the health service:

- ✓ Patient's legal status
- ✓ The purpose of the Health Act's rules on patients' legal position is to ensure that patients' integrity and self-determination are respected'.
- ✓ The Act shall ensure the individual patient's legal certainty in connection with examination, treatment and care within the health service.

### ✓ PATIENTS' RIGHTS

Patients in Denmark have a right to be met as an individual, and with respect and dignity. All hospital regions are obliged to publish all the rights citizens obtain when they become patient/client in this particularly regional hospital system, on their homepages. This includes a guide to how the citizens can complain, if they feel that they have not been treated well or have faced a failed treatment or nursery care.

### ✓ OBLIGATIONS OF PATIENTS

Basically, the patients have to follow the general rules of the institution where they are placed. This means that smoking or intake of any other stimuli is prohibited. In general, authorities try to commit people to be on time when they have an appointment with either the GP or different units at the hospitals.



Right now, it has no consequences if people don't show up for appointments, and a lot of time and money is wasted by this behaviour. It might be one of the negative parts of a free tax paid health system.

## 9. DAILY REGIME IN HOSPITALS IN DENMARK

### ✓ GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFICS OF THE INCOME / STAY AND THE RELEASE OF THE PATIENT FROM THE INSTITUTIONAL CARE

After arriving to the specific unit, the person is registered and showed to the nursery room. At many older hospitals, the standard is double rooms or even four in some rooms. These are more or less reconstructed these years, and in new hospitals, single rooms with its own bath and toilet, tv, access to internet and more, has become the standard now a days. In some new hospitals there are even places for relatives, or at least they can stay at a hotel belonging to the hospitals.

Doctors, nurses, and other groups all have their own line of management and are by that considered as equal professional partners. Doctors are responsible for diagnosing and prescribing the treatment and therapies, and nurses and other staff groups are responsible for their planning and deliveries according to the doctors' part of the whole process. In daily life there is an ongoing conversation with doctors, nurses and therapists about all the steps of the process. There is a high level of respect and equality among different staff groups at Danish hospitals and institutions.



As all treatment and care is free in Denmark, people are also free to say no. It is an obligation for all professionals to inform people about challenges and options, to make sure that the citizens/patients can make decisions about their own situation on an informed basis

## 10. MEDICAL AND NON-MEDICAL WORKERS IN DANISH HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

### ✓ STRUCTURE OF THE MEDICAL TEAM

The medical team at hospitals in Denmark consists of **doctors, nursing staff at level 1 and 2 (presented earlier) and professionals** such as physiotherapists, nutrition therapists, work therapists, speech therapists, gaming specialists, spiritual chaplains etc.

At care institutions all three levels of nursery and care staff is represented.

### ✓ NURSING TEAM STRUCTURE IN DENMARK

The only basic education for nurses in Denmark is a bachelor's educational program of 3,5 years, more or less 2/3 at school and 1/3 work experience. Most students will go for a short working period after these 3,5 years and then specialise in many ways.

In Denmark there are 2 ways to become a bachelor, no matter if it is nursing, occupational or physiotherapy, or anything else. The "old" ordinary way is to graduate upper secondary (gymnasium) and then go for the bachelor (e.g. nursing). Another path is the practical way. Applying to become Social & Health Helper. After this, the person qualifies to become a Social & Health Assistant.



Graduating as Social and Health Assistant, people can go for a bachelor's degree, such as nursing, occupational/ physio therapists, pedagogue and more.

### ✓ THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION FOR NON-MEDICAL HEALTH WORKERS

Even though both Social and Health Helper, and Social and Health Assistants (level 1 and level 2) are to be considered as medical health workers, they have, due to their level of education, a special supplementary educational system named "Labour marked educational system". This educational supplementary system is for free, and the employer will even have a big part of salary costs refunded, when sending staff to the course. The system contains hundreds of courses and these 2 staff groups can, by this system, year by year build up quite high competences in different subjects and areas, that are relevant for the institution or hospital they are working at.

## 11. SPECIFIC AREAS OF HEALTH CARE AND NURSING CARE

### ✓ DYING, PALLIATIVE CARE

Palliative care is a part of all three levels of nursery and care education programs in Denmark. All are trained to be able to take part.

All municipalities have, beyond that, also specialized palliative teams, that can be required if, and when, it is considered necessary to have a good final process. In the same way, some staffs have been specially educated for palliation at relevant units at hospitals.

## Death in Denmark.

A lot of research conducted over many years, shows that the Dane prefer, and wish, to die in their own home. Never the less it is only app. 27% who do so. 22,2% die at a nursing home (which is their own home) but 42,8% die at hospital. The last 8% is mostly at hospice or at different places of accidents.

### – Caring for the dying - Hospice / palliative care

Basically, the basic staff is highly specialised and trained.

They are supported by a huge group of volunteers, and by that, hospices can offer a wide range of supportive efforts. These efforts may also continue if families are in need of support after a person has died. In Denmark there are more and more initiatives in what is called “*grief groups*”. There are groups for children of different age groups, and the last initiatives is e.g. grief groups for senior males. But in between there are several options. These groups can be offered by both professionals connected to different disease associations and can be operated by volunteers.

### – Euthanasia

**Euthanasia** is not legal in Denmark. But as more and more Danes go abroad to finalize their life, it is currently a public discussion, whether it should be legalized. Passive euthanasia takes place in Denmark, as both doctors will keep treating to eliminate pain, even when they know that the doses will end life.



## – Autopsy

The Danish autopsy practice is especially distinguished by the autopsy of people who die suddenly and unexpectedly.

Danish autopsy practices differ significantly from other countries.

If we look at Finland, which annually has about the same number of deaths as in Denmark, nearly 30 percent of all dead Fins are autopsied. The same applies to just under four percent of deceased Danes.

The calculated figures tell us that 2,4% of the 2039 Danes who died suddenly and unexpectedly were autopsied. In Finland, the figure is 88 per cent.

## – Organ donation

The overall Law of Health, Act No. 546 of 24 June 2005, contains in § 53 rules for consent to transplant from deceased persons.

The clinical brain death diagnosis is described in detail in the Checklist for Determination of Brain Disease, prepared by the Brain Disease Committee under Danish Neurosurgical Company.

Doctors are not allowed to do an autopsy without consent from the person or, after death, consent from the family.

In case of an unexplainable death, the police can order an autopsy without consent.

In general, it seems that people don't want to make up their mind about autopsy. Not many people are donating their bodies to science or for organ donation.

People can sign for autopsy and donation at a national homepage and some people wear a little document in their wallet, saying that "I donate my body". However, there are now enough who have made up their mind.

## ✓ PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH

The pregnancy is normally established at the woman's private GP and immediately the pregnant person will be connected to a midwife, that, together with the GP, will follow the pregnant person during the months to come. The pregnant woman is offered ultrasound scans several times, as well as a neck fold scan and malformation scanning. In addition, term calculation is offered if there is doubt as to how advanced the pregnancy is. In addition, many choose to pay for one or more scans. Sex scanning and 3D scanning are additional scans.

- Week 4-10: Term calculation
- Week 11-14: nuchal translucency Scanning
- Week 19-20: Malformation scanning
- Additional scanning.

In Denmark, the pregnant person is free to choose where she would like to give birth and is allowed to decide by which method, she would like to give birth. It is the intention that the midwife who has followed the pregnant person in the months before birth, also is present at birth.

### **Abortion is legal in Denmark.**

In order to have an abortion; the woman must request abortion to

- Her own GP.
- A practitioner in gynaecology or
- The municipality.

This is done by filling in "Request for a discontinuation of pregnancy" (Form A, available from your doctor). The doctor must sign the request to ensure the woman's identity. The woman must therefore bring her health insurance certificate, passport, or equivalent, where documentation of name, address and CPR number appears. If the woman is under 18 and unmarried, the main rule is that one of the parents (or guardians) must consent to the abortion.



## ✓ TRANSFUSION, BLOOD DONATION

All issues regarding blood transfusions in Denmark is handled by The Danish Blood Bank. Transfusions require the patient's informed consent, according to act 4 in the national guideline of blood transfusion. The information should include the different treatment options with blood, and the risk of complications and side effects of these treatments.

In case of a current disease, the patient may refuse to receive blood or blood products. The rejection must be given in connection with the current disease and be based on information from the healthcare provider about the health consequences of avoiding the supply of blood or blood products during treatment<sup>6</sup>.

A healthcare professional may initiate or continue treatment without consent in very special situations. It is about treating patients who temporarily or permanently lack the ability to give informed consent or are under the age of 15, and who are in a situation where immediate treatment is required for the patient.

Source:

<https://bloddonor.dk/tapning-hvor-og-hvordan/karantaeneregler/liste-gældende-karantaeneregler/>

## ✓ TRANSPLANTS

People can decide on organ donation in three different ways:  
(Everyone is equally legally valid)

- In the Donor Register
- On donor cards, which you must keep with you at all times.
- Orally to your relatives.