5 ways towards greater equality in cancer prevention and early detection in Sweden.
Cancer comes in many forms – and so does our work to improve cancer care equality.

THE REGIONAL CANCER CENTRES (RCC) IN SWEDEN SUPPORT THE NATION’S 21 COUNTY councils in increasing the quality of cancer care and improving outcomes, as well as maximising the efficiency of the use of health care resources throughout the patient pathways.

RCC has a supportive, stimulating and coordinating role to develop cancer care according to the intentions of the national cancer strategy and the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan.

The mission is to meet the challenges and demands of tomorrow’s cancer care through outreach and collaboration. RCC has developed systems and programmes to facilitate local, regional and national collaboration.

5 EXAMPLES ON HOW RCC IS WORKING TOWARDS GREATER EQUALITY IN CANCER PREVENTION AND EARLY DETECTION:

- The app that easily provides expert digital support in diagnosing skin cancer with teledermatoscopy.
- QR codes translate screening invitations into your preferred language.
- Reaching beyond healthcare systems.
- Blood tests that detect cancer.
- Eliminating cervical cancer.

SCAN TO FIND OUT MORE
The app that easily provides expert digital support in diagnosing skin cancer with teledermatoscopy

SKIN CANCER IS THE SECOND MOST COMMON TYPE OF CANCER IN SWEDEN. SKIN CANCER RATES have increased more than any other type of cancer.

Now, there is a digital tool to quickly get suspected pigmented skin lesions examined by dermatologists. Through teledermatoscopy, any pigmented skin lesion can be examined regardless how far a patient lives from a dermatology clinic.

Patients can visit their local health care provider who takes a photograph of the skin lesion with a dedicated smartphone connected to a magnifying light—a dermatoscope. The image is uploaded to a database through the app and is checked by dermatologists remotely.

- Faster and better diagnosis no matter where the patient lives.
- Fewer unnecessary operations and pathology tests means less pressure on the healthcare system.
TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN SCREENING PROGRAMMES AND THEREBY REDUCE HEALTH DISPARITIES, invitations to certain screening exams now include a QR code that translates the text into the language the phone is set to.

In addition to Swedish, invitations are translated into Arabic, Somali, Polish, Thai, Sorani, Tigrinya, Farsi and English. The phone will automatically access the English translation if the user’s phone is set to a language other than the ones mentioned above.

QR codes streamline the process of accessing web-based information included in printed invitations. They are also used in digital surveys, for example, in a pilot study for a lung cancer screening programme targeting women who smoke.

- Information available in eight languages.
Our reach extends beyond that of some healthcare systems

LIFESTYLE HABITS AND LIFESPAN VARY GREATLY BETWEEN DIFFERENT GROUPS AND SOCIOECONOMIC areas in the Swedish society – just like in most other countries. Health disparities are widening quickly, and the healthcare system struggles to reach all communities using traditional methods.

Peer-to-peer advisors are engaged individuals helping to reduce those health divides by spreading information on cancer prevention and healthy lifestyle habits in their communities through public spaces, schools and clubs.

They are trained by RCC on the European Code Against Cancer to inform and advise in their communities on diet, tobacco, alcohol, physical activity, healthy weight, sun exposure and participating in screening and vaccination programmes.

○ Results indicate that participation in screening programmes has increased in those areas where peer-to-peer advisors are active.

○ Our advisors’ connection to the community have cultural knowledge and ability to provide information in community members’ native languages, help them share information and establish conversations in places where the healthcare system would otherwise struggle to reach.
Blood tests that detect cancer

In the EU, the cancer death rate is expected to increase by more than 24% by 2035. By studying biomarkers – substances in the blood that can be used to identify an anomaly in patients – cancer can be detected at an earlier stage, which increases the chance of survival.

RCC collaborates with Umeå University and Region Västerbotten on the “Predict” project. A selection of biomarkers is analysed from a biobank that consists of blood samples from healthy individuals who have donated samples taken during check-ups with their primary care physicians since 1990. These blood samples are matched with the Swedish Cancer Registry to determine which individuals developed cancer and analyse why.

Technology is paving new ways to detect cancer earlier.
EVERY TWO DAYS, A WOMAN DIES OF CERVICAL CANCER IN SWEDEN. Cervical cancer is caused by HPV (human papillomavirus). Sweden is actively working to eliminate cervical cancer and prevent other types of HPV-related cancer.

The Swedish healthcare system offers free HPV vaccination through schools to all boys and girls 11 years and older. Additionally, there is a free-of-charge national screening programme that offers HPV tests and papsmears to women aged 23-70.

Catch-up vaccines with subsequent HPV testing are also available to women born between 1994-1999 who were not included in the vaccination programme as children. This work is being conducted within the framework of a national study. Thanks to how widespread these national programmes are, even hard-to-reach groups in our communities are expected to participate. By these strategies for vaccination and screening against HPV, cervical cancer can be the first cancer to be eradicated.

- 8 out of 10 children participate in the HPV vaccine programme.
- 82% of the invited women participate in the population-based cervical cancer screening programme.
- So far, 34,000 women have been vaccinated through the national catch-up HPV vaccine programme.
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