

**Public release date: 17-Jan-2006**

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### **Norwegian government handles research fraud**

The Norwegian government is looking into all sides of the research fraud discovered at the Rikshospitalet – Radiumhospitalet Health Trust in Oslo, and will implement new measures to prevent future fraud.

The management at the Hospital informed the Minister of Health and Care Services on Monday about the serious situation at the Hospital. The case was reported to the Norwegian Board of Health on Saturday.

Also, the Minister of Education and Research, Mr. Øystein Djupedal, held high-level meetings with the Research Council of Norway on Monday, pointing out measures to be taken against fraud. A national antifraud commission will be established this spring, following recommendations made by the Research Council before the recent scandal. Both Mr. Djupedal and Mr. Arvid Hallén, CEO of the Research Council, take the matter very seriously:

-It is a very serious affair, and it is our hope that the reputation of Norwegian research is not seriously harmed. It is important that we investigate the case thoroughly. Experience shows that research fraud is a limited problem, but we must work continuously to promote high ethical standards, Mr. Hallén says. Minister Djupedal adds that research institutions themselves have a special responsibility to create sound systems to prevent fraud.

The hospital has established an external investigating committee headed by Professor Anders Ekbohm of Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm. Other members of the committee include Dag Thelle from the University of Oslo and representatives from The Norwegian Institute of Public Health, The Research Council of Norway and members from other relevant organizations. The committee will begin its work early this week.

### **Reported last week**

Last week, an external scientist questioned data used in a research report published in

The Lancet in October 2005. When the suspicion of data fraud was reported to Rikshospitalet – Radiumhospitalet Health Trust on Wednesday evening, internal investigations were immediately carried out. Further investigation confirmed that the scientist in question had fabricated all data in the article, without detection by co-authors, the hospital's control routines or by The Lancet itself.

-This is very serious. It's also a deep, personal tragedy for the scientist in question," says Stein Vaaler, Strategy Director at Rikshospitalet – Radiumhospitalet Health Trust.

During the weekend the scientist, now on sick leave, formally agreed to give the external investigating committee access to all his data. The committee will investigate into both fabricated data upon which The Lancet article was based, as well as research data used in 38 other articles previously published internationally by the scientist. Co-authors participation and their possible responsibility for the fraud will also be investigated.

The article published in The Lancet in October describes how medicines called NSAID, commonly used to relieve pain in connection with inflammatory infections, can reduce the risk of oral cavity cancer. The conclusion was that this type of medicine could have a preventive effect on cancer.

-But we now know the research data are fabricated," says Vaaler. The Hospital immediately notified all national and international partners and associates affected by the research fraud.

-This situation is very difficult for an internationally well-known research institute. We deeply apologise to all our associates affected by this case, says Stein Vaaler.

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