

Major Chronic Diseases Gain Research Boost in Sweden

A new Swedish National Research Programme will further reinforce Sweden's leading position in the area of chronic inflammatory diseases. For the first time ever a patient organisation is involved in the cooperation to develop new methods of treatment.

Chronic inflammatory diseases are growing in significance: one out of every six Swedes suffers from one or more forms which include rheumatic diseases, cardiovascular diseases, MS, psoriasis and asthma. To develop new methods of treatment, pharmaceutical products and to transfer the research results quicker, six organisations have aligned themselves in a new National Research Programme – Chronic Inflammation.

The Invest in Sweden Agency (ISA), The KK-Foundation, The Swedish Rheumatism Association, The Foundation for Strategic Research (SSF), VINNOVA and Vårdalstiftelsen are investing 85 million SEK (9 million EURO) in the programme. The new element is that for the first time a patient organisation is participating in the research process by joining as a financier.

Attractive conditions for research

By merging together in an effective network, the strong infra structure for research in Sweden can be better used. Prime conditions in the form of unique bio banks and national quality registries have up till now not been used fully within research.

"The demands of the programme for new collaboration with arenas and meeting points for exchange of knowledge and ideas are assumed to lead to new and effective therapies and to diminish the time for the development of industrial applications", commented Håkan Eriksson, from the KK-Foundation.

The programme will also be put on the international market." By also inviting foreign investors and researchers we will be able to further strengthen Sweden's chances to take an international leading position in the area", comments Kai Hammerich, director general of ISA.

Great cost savings for the community

The consequences of chronic diseases on the individual include serious disability, reduced working capacity and increased sickness and mortality caused by complications. And these diseases mean great costs for the health care system. Nationally in 2001 the costs for rheumatic diseases alone were estimated to more than 36 billion SEK. Of these, 31 billion were indirect costs (in form of reduced productivity) while the direct costs (for care and pharmaceuticals) were 5 billion SEK.