



PHOTO: NORDFORSK/TERJE HEIESTAD

"WE NEED TO INCREASE ACCESS TO RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES AND ENSURE SHARING OF COMPETENCES AND RESOURCES, FOR EXAMPLE BY HAVING A COMMON DATABASE STRUCTURE FOR THE ENTIRE REGION."

PIERRE LAFOLIE, PROJECT MANGAGER, NORDIC TRIAL ALLIANCE

BOOSTING CLINICAL TRIALS IN THE NORDIC REGION

We possess much strength when it comes to conducting clinical trials in the Nordic region but we are still lagging behind in terms of global competition. How can we be better?

TEXT by MALIN ANDERSON

NLS SPOKE TO Professor Pierre Lafolie, project manager at the Nordic Trial Alliance, about the future of clinical trials up here in the north.

What is the purpose of the Nordic Trial Alliance?

"The Nordic Trial Alliance (NTA) is associated with the Nordic Council of Ministers' Programme of Sustainable Nordic Welfare, which has the purpose of creating a sustainable Nordic welfare. The project is funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers and NordForsk and will run

from 2013 to 2016. The main aim of the project is to create social justice and equal and equitable healthcare. The Nordic Trial Alliance's purpose is to create better conditions for coherent clinical research in the Nordic region; it is designed to increase coordination of multi-centre clinical trials in the Nordic countries."

There has been a significant decrease in clinical trials in the Nordic countries, what are the consequences?

"Today clinical research is moving to developing countries, especially Asia. If we do not create better conditions for Nordic trials, more multinational trial proposals will be redirected to other areas of the world. This means a moribund development and hence, the Nordic population will have less access, and delayed access, to new treatment methods and products. Industry will move its activities to other countries and it will be harder for SMEs to develop products.

Are there any differences between the Nordic countries?

"In Denmark we can see a small increase in the number of clinical trials. Denmark is also the only Nordic country with a domestic pharmaceutical industry. Overall, the Öresund region is the most active life science region."

What obstacles must we overcome in order to increase the number of clinical trials in the Nordic countries?

"We need to attract foreign research to the Nordic region and face the competition as a strong region, rather than as individual countries. We need to increase

access to research infrastructures and ensure sharing of competences and resources, for example by having a common database structure for the entire region. Currently, for a multi-national trial, there are different rules, legislation and ethical committees for each country. A common system would facilitate research over the Nordic borders. The bureaucracy needs to be simplified and we need to have easier access to patient populations."

What are the Nordic strengths when it comes to clinical trials?

"We have a democratic and well developed healthcare system, a stable patient population, common treatment modalities, high quality registers and biobanks, and a highly competent research environment, both in the public sector and in industry."

What goals do you hope to have achieved when this pilot project ends in 2016?

"I hope we have launched several tangible projects that will reduce the bureaucratic obstacles, including a common database handling system so that researchers can more easily handle and monitor study data. I also hope that we will have increased the number of research projects, and included more therapy areas, between the healthcare and research sectors, including both life science companies and academia. For this we need a larger amount of public funding. We also need to increase patient group involvement." **NLS**