



Nordic Gerontological Federation

# GeroNord

News on research, developmental work and education within the  
ageing area in the Nordic Countries

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*In this newsletter:*

- Words from the President
- 26NKG: Late Breaking Poster Abstract Call
- Keynotes at the 26NKG
- Prize winners & Travel grants 2022
- Recent doctoral dissertations
- Gerontology in the Nordic countries: Denmark
- The executive committee and NGF representatives



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## Words from the President

Dear friends & colleagues,

Now that the 26<sup>th</sup> Nordic Congress of Gerontology in Odense draws nearer, the excitement is almost palpable. I am happy to say that the registration is going very well and that there is a great interest in the congress. In this (hopefully) post-covid era this is not a certainty and many congress organizers are facing challenges related to increased demand for online events and are battling a new phenomenon called „hogo”, short for „hassle of going out “. Many of us have fallen into new behavioral patterns due to the pandemic and are now used to being able to conduct a big proportion of our work and social life from our couches at home. Fortunately, the Nordic gerontological community seems to be ready to break this pattern and I am looking forward to a very high-quality onsite congress with exciting contributions from all the Nordic countries and beyond, as we also have many international guests this year. The advantages of meeting in person are becoming clearer and many seasoned congress goers can testify that the greatest magic usually happens between formal sessions. Online congresses may often provide very good opportunities to give and receive new knowledge but they do not enable you to introduce yourself to the „rock-star” in your field during a coffee break or track down a researcher from another country who shares your interests and might be a good collaborator. I challenge all of you to make it your mission to create at least one new connection in Odense this summer and make the most of this networking opportunity. By building bridges, we become a stronger community, expand the scope and quality of our work and can assert greater influence on society in general when it comes to our common goal, to ensure health and happiness in ageing.

I look forward to seeing you in Odense in June!

Best wishes to you all,



**Steinunn Thordardottir**

President of the Nordic Gerontological Federation



## The program for the 26NKG at a glance

The keynotes at the 26NKG represents a broad range of scientific disciplines in the field of gerontology, internationally as well as locally.

**Kaare Christensen:** *Change and Continuity among the Oldest in Society.*

Kaare Christensen is Professor of Epidemiology, University of Southern Denmark, Department of Public Health. Christensen is the Director of the Danish Aging Research Center and the Danish Twin Registry. Since the 1990s, he has been studying change and continuity among the oldest in Denmark.

**Lone Grøn:** *A Good Enough Life and Death?*

Lone Grøn is professor MSO at VIVE, The Danish Center for Social Science Research. For two decades she has conducted anthropological research on chronic diseases, self-care, obesity, vulnerability in aging, dementia and end of life focusing on everyday life, patient and family perspectives. She is currently PI on "Aging as a Human Condition. Radical Uncertainty and the Search for a Good (Old) Life" and "ALTER-US. Kinship, Cognitive Difference and Care in the 21st Century Danish Welfare State".

**Mark Tully:** *What counts more for older adults: the health or social benefits of physical activity?*

Professor Mark Tully a Professor of Public Health at Ulster University, where he is Director of the Institute of Mental Health Sciences. After graduating with a 1st class honours degree in Biomedical Science from Queen's University Belfast in 2000, Mark undertook a PhD on the health benefits of home-based walking programmes. Since then he has held positions at Queen's University Belfast and University of Cambridge.

**Kène Henkens:** *Preconditions for prolonging working life – between policies, civil society and the life course.*

Kène Henkens is a head of the Theme group on Work & Retirement and is a professor of Ageing, retirement and the Life course at the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG-RUG). He also holds a chair in Sociology of Retirement at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). He has received a VIDI grant from the National Science Foundation (NWO) and a VICI grant in 2014. He is associate editor of the new Oxford journal Work, Aging & Retirement. Henkens is member of the Academia Europaea.

**Karen Andersen-Ranberg:** *Digital health in the future of geriatric medicine.*

Clinical professor Karen Andersen-Ranberg is a consultant physician and geriatrician at Odense University Hospital and Department of Clinical Research at the University of Southern Denmark. Her main clinical research area is digital health, which includes eHealth, health information technology (AI), and telehealth. She is also affiliated to the Department of Public Health, active in epidemiological research on oldest olds and centenarians in Denmark, as well as heading the Health Area group of the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE).

**Marvin Formosa:** *Considering and working with older adults as learners: What professional competencies are required?*

Marvin Formosa is Professor at Department of Gerontology and Dementia Studies Rector's Delegate, University of the Third Age (Malta)

**Peter Simonsen:** *Old Age in Literature: Continuities and Changes.*

Peter Simonsen is Professor of European Literature at the Department for the Study of Culture, University of Southern Denmark. He is Director of English Studies and Head of the Research Center for Uses of Literature. He has studied the relations between literary creativity and ageing for over two decades.

**Tahir Masud:** *Recent developments in falls assessment and management.*

Tahir Masud is Professor of Geriatric Medicine, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, Nottingham UK, Visiting Professor, Odense University I Hospital and University of Southern Denmark.

[Learn more about the program.](#)



## Late Breaking Poster Abstract Call: Deadline May 10

The Late Breaking Poster Abstracts is an opportunity to have your work peer-reviewed by experts in the field and present your research results.

**The call is open for the previously announced congress themes: Digitisation and technology - Housing, generations and mobility - Lifestyle, engagement and transition - Education and competences in ageing societies - Morbidity, medical treatment and ageing processes - A good life and a good death.**

**Published abstract:** if accepted, your abstract will be published together with all other congress abstracts in a conference special issue of Journal of Ageing and Longevity.

**Best poster award:** the scientific committee of the 26NKG conference will nominate a poster for the best poster award. This will be granted by the Journal of Ageing and Longevity and will be announced at the closing ceremony of the congress. The poster sessions will take place in the foyer areas of the congress venue Odeon, ensuring maximum exposure of your poster.

*Looking forward to greeting you in Odense in June!*

*On behalf of the organizing committee,*



**Jette Thuesen**, President

**Pia Nimann Kannegaard**, Secretary General

## The Sohlberg Prize winner 2022: Professor Susanne Iwarsson



The Nordic Prize in Gerontology 2022, the Sohlberg Prize, is awarded to Susanne Iwarsson, professor of Gerontology at Lund's University. The Sohlberg Prize will be awarded at the opening ceremony of the 26th Nordic Congress of Gerontology in Odense, Denmark, June 8-10 2022.

Susanne Iwarsson has served as professor in Gerontology at the University of Lund since 2005 at the Department of Health Sciences. She has greatly contributed to the development of ageing research in the Nordic countries, and more widely. She has had an essential role in capacity building of Gerontology in the University of Lund as the founding leader and coordinator of Center for Aging and Supportive Environments (2007-). Since 2014 Susanne Iwarsson has been the coordinator of the Swedish National Graduate School for Competitive Science on Ageing and Health (SWEAH).

Professor Iwarsson has a background in occupational therapy and has done groundbreaking research focusing on the interaction of ageing individuals and their living environment. One of her greatest achievements is the 'Housing Enabler' tool for assessment of the living environment and the person-environment fit.

Professor Iwarsson has authored more than 700 scientific, professional and popular articles and supervised 25 PhD's, and has been successful in establishing a large and vibrant research group. In addition to all this, she has been highly active in the public debate and knowledge translation with an outreach to numerous organizations, professionals, public authorities and policymakers in the field of ageing and older people.

The Sohlberg Prize is of €10.000 and generously sponsored by [the Päivikki and Sakari Sohlberg Foundation](#). Susanne Iwarsson will give a prize lecture at the 26NKG on June 10 2022.

The nominations have been evaluated by a Nordic scientific jury.



## Promising researcher in Gerontology: Ida Karlsson



The prize for the Promising researcher in Gerontology 2022 will be awarded to Ida Karlsson, post doc at Karolinska Institutet, Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

The prize will be awarded at the opening ceremony of the 26th Nordic Congress of Gerontology in Odense, Denmark, on June 8 2022.

The focus of Ida Karlsson's research is the genetic epidemiology of aging, where she uses genetic and epigenetic methods to better understand the ageing process and. Her main interests are:

- How and why overweight at different ages influence the risk of cognitive decline, dementia, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.
- How physical and mental health change in preclinical dementia.

Ida Karlsson has a background in biomedicine and has during her PhD studies deepened her knowledge in the fields of epidemiology, gerontology, genetics and more. Ida Karlsson has already worked in several different research environments and has established research collaboration with gerontologists at the University of Edinburgh. Furthermore she has been a Visiting Fulbright scholar for six months at the Department of Psychology, University of California Riverside, USA under the Fulbright program with Professor Chandra Reynolds.

The Prize for Promising Researcher is of 20.000 SEK and is sponsored by the Nordic Gerontological Federation. Ida Karlsson will give a prize lecture at the 26NKG in Odense, Denmark, on June 10 2022.

The nominations have been evaluated by a Nordic scientific jury.



## Grants for participation in the 26NKG

NGF and the 26NKG support the participation of PhD candidates and non-senior researchers in the Nordic Congress of Gerontology. This year 9 travel grants have been awarded, granting the candidates free participation in the congress and a travel grant of 5.000 SEK.

### **Sweden**

Alexandra Wennberg, Post doc, Karolinska Institutet.

Roar Hermansen Ostby, PhD candidate, University of Gothenburg.

### **Finland**

Katja Lindeman, PhD candidate, University of Jyväskylä.

Katariina Tuominen, PhD candidate, Tampere University.

### **Iceland**

Inga Valgerður Kristinsdóttir, PhD candidate, The University of Iceland.

Berglind Soffía Ásbjörnsdóttir Blöndal, PhD candidate, Heilsuvernd (*not in photo*).



**Norway**

Inger Molvik, PhD candidate, the Norwegian National Centre for Ageing and Health.

**Denmark & The Faroe Islands**

Katrine B. Komischke-Konnerup, PhD candidate, Aarhus University

Eina Eliassen (The Faroe Islands), PhD candidate, Department of Occupational Medicine and Public Health, the Faroese Hospital System.

## Recent doctoral dissertations

### Older people in Sweden – Age at migration, poverty and utilization of long-term care services

Hanna Mac Innes has been awarded a PhD degree at Göteborgs universitet, Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten on March 25 2022.

This thesis studies the significance of age at migration for labor market integration and old-age poverty, as well as the utilization of long-term care services by older people. This thesis comprises four studies. All four are empirical studies using register data from National Board of Health and Welfare and Statistics Sweden, comprising a total population. The results showed that age at migration is a strong predictor for labor market integration compared to other factors such as educational level and number of children. Time until getting a first foothold in the labor market increases rapidly with age at migration, starting already at age 40+. This has implications for the financial situation in older age. Findings of this thesis show that the risk of being both income and wealth poor increases with rising age at migration.

This thesis also shows that every third person born in a low-income country are both income and wealth poor. Meanwhile the equivalent number among Swedish born older persons is nearly one percent. Later in life, migration may imply a disadvantage in relation to the labor market and increased poverty in older age. However, when it comes to LTCS, utilization in older age there is a different pattern. The results from this study suggest that late in life migration does not have to imply lower utilization of LTCS. Findings show substantial heterogeneity across and within different birth countries. Although migrating later in life may increase the risk of being poor in older age, it seems as the LTCS are relatively equally distributed across different income groups among Swedish and foreign-born older persons. The Inverse Care Law states that those who most need care are least likely to receive it, while those with least care needs tend to care services more. The results show that that the Inverse Care Law does not apply to the utilization of LTCS by Swedish-born older people, nor by the majority of older migrants. However, the Inverse Care Law

does appear to operate for older persons born in low-income countries who do not have a partner.

Comprehensive geriatric assessment (CGA) is a central part of geriatric medicine. However, the concept of CGA is not well established, and the use of the term CGA is incoherent and unclear in both research and clinical practice. There is also a paucity of research considering CGA use in daily clinical practice.

The aim of the thesis has been to get knowledge on a) how do Finnish geriatricians use CGA in their clinical practices, b) how the data acquired from a widely used geriatric assessment instrument (interRAI) may be utilised to detect hospitalised patients with an increased risk of adverse hospital outcomes, and c) on the challenges of the geriatric assessment implementation process by describing the preliminary results of a depression screening protocol implemented among respiratory insufficiency patients at a pulmonary outpatient clinic in a tertiary hospital.

[Learn more about the thesis.](#)

Source: [www.sweah.lu.se](http://www.sweah.lu.se)

## Better all the time? Trends in health and longevity among older adults in Sweden

Louise Sundberg has been awarded a PhD degree at the Institute för neurobiologi, vårdvetenskap och samhälle / Dept of Neurobiology, Care Sciences and Society on November 24 2021.

### Background

The health status of the aging population has become one of the major public health concerns today, as the number of older people increases in both absolute and relative terms and life expectancy continues to increase. The increases in life expectancy observed today is mainly the result of improved survival in old age, and as old age is a major risk factor for disease and disability, a major question of concern is to what extent increasing life expectancy comes with years with or without disability.

### Aim

The overarching aim of this thesis is to assess whether the increasing old age life expectancy in Sweden has been accompanied by years with or without disability, and to what extent the development differs by gender and education. In addition, the ages and causes of death that drive the increase in life expectancy are investigated. Finally, the burden of disability at exceptional old age is explored in countries with different mortality selection.

### Data

The data sources used in this thesis come from Statistics Sweden (SCB), The Swedish Cause of Death Register, the Swedish Panel Study of Living Conditions of the Oldest Old (SWEOLD), The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), and The 5- Country Oldest Old Project (5-COOP).

### Study 1

Remaining life expectancy free of severe-disability, mild disability, and mobility limitations at age 77 were estimated at several time points between 1992 and 2011. This was done by combining national mortality statistics from SCB with health data from SWEOLD and

SHARE. Results are heterogeneous, but in general years without disability increased more than years with disability. A more favorable development was observed among women and the gender difference in disability-free life expectancy decreased over time.

## Study 2

The impact of age- and cause-specific mortality on the increase in life expectancy and the decrease in the gender gap in life expectancy between 1997 and 2014 was assessed by using data from the Swedish Cause of Death Registry. Results showed that decreasing mortality from ischemic heart disease in ages 65 and older explained most of the increase in overall life expectancy, and the convergence of the gender gap. On the other hand, certain causes of death had a diminishing impact on life expectancy, most prominently Alzheimer's disease and unspecified dementia in the age group 85 and above.

## Study 3

Disability-free life expectancy at age 77 was estimated between 2002 and 2014 by educational attainment. Mortality statistics from SCB by education were combined with disability estimates by education from SWEOLD. Results show that the increase in disability-free life expectancy was greater than the increase in life expectancy for women with both higher and lower education, and for men with higher education. However, for men with lower education, both years with and without disability increased. Overall, there was a more positive development for those with higher education and the inequalities in disability-free life expectancy increased over time.

## Study 4

The main aim was to test if centenarians in countries with stronger mortality selection into exceptionally old age have a lower level of disability than centenarians in countries with a weaker mortality selection. The 5-COOP survey was used, which includes centenarians from five countries: Japan, France, Switzerland, Denmark, and Sweden. Results indicated that the probability of having disability was lower in the countries with a stronger mortality selection (Denmark and Sweden) than in countries with weaker mortality selection (Japan, France, Switzerland). Nevertheless, the highest probabilities of disability were found in Switzerland, which ranked in the middle in terms of mortality selection.



## Conclusion

There was an overall positive development, where disability-free life expectancy increased more than total life expectancy during the study period, except for men with lower education. Women had greater gains in disability-free years and greater reduction in disabled years than men, and consequently the gender difference in disability-free life expectancy decreased over time. However, educational differences increased over time as those with lower education did not have the same favorable development as those with higher education. The major driver of the observed increase in life expectancy was reduced mortality from ischemic heart disease among those aged 65 and older. Among centenarians, however, the burden of health problems is high and appears to be greater in countries with a weaker mortality selection into exceptionally old age.

### **List of papers:**

I. Sundberg, L., Agahi, N., Fritzell, J., & Fors, S. (2016). Trends in health expectancies among the oldest old in Sweden, 1992-2011. *European Journal of Public Health*. 2016 Dec;26(6):1069-1074.

[Learn more about the thesis.](#)

Source: [www.sweah.lu.se](http://www.sweah.lu.se)



## Gerontology in the Nordic countries: Denmark

In this second feature in the series of brief insights into gerontology in the Nordic countries, we will take a look at Denmark.

In Denmark, the members of the Nordic Gerontological Federation are the Danish Geriatric Society and the Danish Gerontological Society.

Currently both organizations are involved in organizing the 26NKG that will take place in Odense, Denmark on June 8-10, 2022.

This status is based on information provided by Jette Thuesen, President of the Danish Gerontological Society and Pia Kannegaard, Board Member of the Danish Geriatric Society.

**The Danish Geriatric Society** is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022. Founded in 1972 as the Danish Society of Long-term Medicine, the specialty was a fraction under Internal Medicine. At that time there were 13 departments of Long-term Medicine with 23 chief physicians. In 1991 the specialty - and society - changed its name to the present Danish Society of Geriatrics.

In 2022 the organization counts more than 320 members (all doctors), including approximately 150 specialists in geriatric medicine and a very large group of young doctors in training to become geriatricians.

Learn more about the Danish Geriatric Society at [www.geriatri.dk](http://www.geriatri.dk)

**The Danish Gerontological Society** had its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021. Formed in 1946 the board consisted of 12 doctors and started under the name “Danish Society for Research in Old Age” (“Dansk Selskab for Alderdomsforskning”). With the presidency of Andrus Viidik in 1975 the society began a movement towards its current position as an organization that works for an inter- and crossdisciplinary approach to old age. One of the main concerns is to distribute gerontological research and knowledge. Doing so, the society stresses bridges a dichotomized image of elderly people as either successful and resourceful, or as weak and frail. Today the board, as well as the members, consists of people based in research, eldercare and education.

The Danish Gerontological Society currently counts around 300 members.

Learn more about the Danish Gerontological Society at <https://danskgerontologi.dk>

## Overview

Denmark has a population of approx. 5.8 million people, with more than 1.1 million people at the age of 65 or above. Approximately 1200 people living in Denmark today are centenarians. The eldest population group is the fastest growing in Denmark.

### Geriatrics in Denmark

There are approximately 20-22 geriatric wards (or units with a geriatric function) in the Danish public healthcare system. The geriatric specialty is increasingly focused towards both the acute setting, the cross-sectional collaboration as in subspecialisation e.g., working together with orthopedic surgeons, oncologists and urologists and in-hospital setting. Together with inpatient service and ambulatory functions most departments are developing outgoing services as the in-hospital length of stay decreases.

The specialty of geriatrics is an independent specialty in line with the other 8 internal medical specialties. Pre-graduate education can take place at the University in Copenhagen, Odense, Aarhus and Aalborg. There has been an increasing interest in the geriatric specialty among young doctors and an increasing focus on strong professionalism as the only remaining generalists among the internal medical doctors and a stronger research profile attracts new specialists.

As in many other countries, the health care system has been under a lot of pressure during the corona pandemic. Despite the concern raised by medical staff and others working in the healthcare service for decades, it seems to come as a surprise to some that the health care system needs beds, resources and not least warm hands (staff). Denmark came through the corona pandemic without a collapse of the healthcare system, but the system is still struggling.

### **Main gerontological themes in Denmark**

Along with a growth in older people (the number of 80+ will increase from 292.500 in 2022 to expected 503.800 in 2024) there is a decrease in people wanting to work in the eldercare and in the current workforce. These problems with recruiting and employee retention are already huge, and this is a main reason for an urgent need for rethinking the Danish welfare model. To do so a new "Elderlaw" is currently being prepared, with inspiration from the other Nordic countries. The work is being led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Senior Citizens. One of the main concerns is how to integrate the social services and social law and the healthcare services and health law. The work includes input from three expert groups of researchers, stakeholder organisations and directors in the area of eldercare in the municipalities.

Another gerontological topic that is currently largely featured in the political and public debate is a growing concern and interest with what could be termed 'senior worklife'. The debate has voiced a criticism towards stereotypical and ageist notions of people in the late part of their worklife as people who eg. are not able to learn new skills, stuck in old ways of doing things and slower than younger colleagues. This debate also raises awareness about the institutional barriers that can prevent people from staying longer than the average pension age or finding new employment if they lose their job at a late age.

Yet another gerontological topic is gerontology in higher education. Gerontology is an integrated part of education programs at the six vocational colleges in Denmark as well as a few courses at the main universities. There is a need for an increasing focus on gerontology in higher education.

## Examples of activities in the organisations

The Danish Geriatric Society arranges two scientific meetings for members per year and members take part in a number of interest groups. The group of younger geriatricians arrange several scientific meetings, some held as webinars.

One of the main purposes for the Danish Gerontological Society is to disseminate knowledge from a wide range of disciplines and provide grounds for critical discussions across disciplines. The DGS hosts an annual national conference that gathers people from both research and practice. The Journal of Gerontology ("Tidsskriftet Gerontologi") is published twice a year with peer-reviewed articles, essays and debate posts. A newsletter is sent out four times a year with news about gerontological research, development with care and ageing as well as new publications. The DGS also distributes funds to projects that disseminate gerontological knowledge through eg. lectures, publications, exhibitions and more.

Furthermore, the DGS hosts an interdisciplinary network of professionals, the VEGA network, that started in 1996. The members of the network consist of educational institutions, workplaces and individuals and is centered around an interest in the everyday life of elderly people, through seminars, publications and network meetings.



## The Board & Executive Committee of the NGF

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### Executive committee

Steinunn Þórðardóttir: President

Jette Thuesen: 1. Vice president

Nils Holand: 2. Vice president

Ólöf Guðný Geirsdóttir: Secretary General of the 25NKG

### Representatives from the member organizations

#### Denmark

Danish Gerontological Society (Dansk Gerontologisk Selskab): Jette Thuesen.

Danish Society for Geriatrics (Dansk Selskab for Geriatri): Pia Nimann Kannegaard.

#### Finland

Societas Gerontologica Fennica: Mikaela von Bonsdorff.

Finnish Geriatricians (Suomen Geriatriit ry - Finlands Geriatriker rf): Eija Lönnroos.

Finnish Society for Growth and Ageing Research (Kasvun ja vanhenemisen tutkijat ry - Föreningen för forskning i uppväxt och åldrande): Linda Enroth.

#### Iceland

The Icelandic Gerontological Society (Öldrunarfræðafélag Íslands): Sírý Sif Sigurlaugardóttir & Sigrún Huld Þorgrímsdóttir.

The Icelandic Geriatrics Society (Félag Íslenskra Öldrunarlækna): Steinunn Þórðardóttir.

#### Norway

Norwegian Society for Aging Research (Norsk selskap for aldersforskning): Marijke Veenstra.

Norwegian Geriatrics Association (Norsk geriatriisk forening): Nils Holand.

#### Sweden

Swedish Gerontological Society (Sveriges Gerontologiska Sällskap): Cristina Joy Torgé.

Swedish Geriatrics Society (Svensk Geriatrisk Förening): Peter Nordström.

### Secretary and treasurer

Louise Scheel Thomasen.

#### The Editorial Staff of the GeroNord

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