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Nursing homes are important learning sites for work-based training for medical students

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Background & Aim: Tomorrow's physicians have to deal with a rapidly growing ageing population. Despite being the largest institutional level in our health care system, Norwegian medical students have so far not been trained in nursing homes as part of their undergraduate training. In 2013 the University of Oslo in collaboration with Oslo municipality established a pilot program of two weeks clinical rotation in nursing homes for medical students in their last year of the study. The students were trained in clinical skills and procedures according to a written manual supervised by nursing home physicians. The aim of this study was to evaluate the training.

Method: Students who were in practice spring and autumn 2015 and their supervisors participated in focus group interviews. We had four groups, separate for students (n= 10) and supervisors (n=11).

Results: Both students and supervisors found the training very useful. The students reported improved skills in communication with elderly patients and their next of kin. They were engaged in multidisciplinary team work, particularly in medication review and in the end-of-life care. The possibility to work independently with access to supervision was viewed as crucial for a good learning process. The students were surprised about the large extent of advanced medical treatment in nursing homes. The supervisors experienced that the students gained valuable insight in nursing home practice. Finding time for supervision was, however, a challenge for the nursing home physicians.

Conclusions: An aging population calls for physicians skilled in treatment of elderly patients. Nursing homes are important learning sites for work-based training in clinical skills, communication and multidisciplinary teamwork.