

Use of Home Based Services by the Elderly in Norway: Is Equity Accomplished?

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Aim. To examine whether there are socioeconomic inequities in the use of home based services (home help and home nursing) for the elderly in Norway. In a social democratic welfare state, health and social services should be allocated according to needs. One might, however, expect that socioeconomic inequities in the use of home based services will emerge, for two reasons. Firstly, the user charges were introduced for home nursing in 1991, and the charges for home help have been increasing since the beginning of the eighties. Secondly, the home based services have become more scarce in the past years, and a more rigorous process of prioritization and allocation has developed. Due to these changes we expect that, *ceteris paribus*, the elderly who are endowed with a certain amount of economic resources and have a higher social status are more likely to get access to home based services than elderly who are less well off.

Methods. The hypothesis was examined in 1995, by analyzing a nationwide representative sample of 960 people aged 65-98 years. The use of home help and home nursing was estimated by sex, age, marital status, previous occupational class, household income, economic problems and the "need", i.e., functional ability and long-standing illness. The relationships were modeled by means of multiple logistic regression.

Results and Conclusions. The need was by far the most important predictor of the use of home help and home nursing. Yet, there are indications that home help but not home nursing is underused, and that economic problems and not occupational class and income play an independent role in this.

Key words: *health services for the aged; home care services; social support; socioeconomic factors*

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