

Traditionally, biological drugs have been defined as medicinal products produced by or extracted from living cells or tissue, but synthetically produced drugs with an effect on the immune system can also be defined as biological drugs. Biological drugs are currently used in the treatment of immunological disorders and cancer.

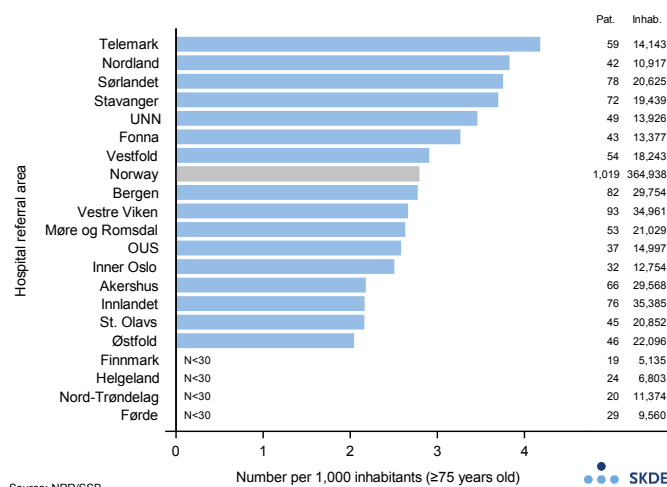


Background

Our analyses include the use of biological drugs for rheumatic joint and back diseases (rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis), connective tissue diseases and vasculopathies, chronic inflammatory bowel diseases, psoriasis and multiple sclerosis. Patients diagnosed with cancer have been excluded. Treatment with biological drugs is considered for patients who do not tolerate other forms of treatment or for whom other treatments are not sufficiently effective, and many patients find that biological drugs greatly improve their condition and quality of life.

Biological drugs are very expensive and subject to a special funding regime known as the 'H prescription scheme'. As a rule, only hospitals doctors employed by health trusts can prescribe such drugs. They can only be prescribed by others by agreement with the RHAs. The individual RHA must pay for the biological drugs used by residents in its catchment area.

Approx. 11,500 patients aged 50-74 years were treated with biological drugs for the same conditions in 2015. The treatment rate for the younger age group is about three times as high as for the older group.

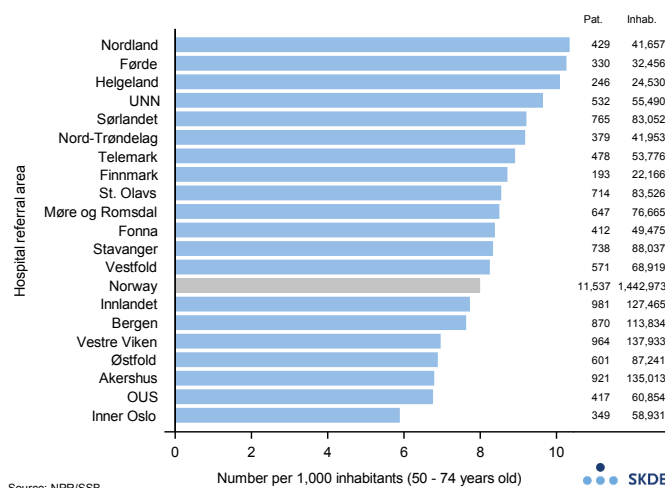


Biological drugs, number of patients per 1,000 population, 75 years and older, adjusted for gender and age, number of patients and pop.

Results

In 2015, approx. 1,000 elderly patients (ge 75 years) were treated with biological drugs for rheumatic diseases of the joints and back, connective tissue diseases and vasculopathies, chronic inflammatory bowel diseases, psoriasis and multiple sclerosis (MS). The proportion of women in the sample is 69%, and the average age is 79.1 years.

Residents of Telemark hospital referral area are treated with biological drugs twice as often as people resident in the Østfold area.



Biological drugs, number of patients per 1,000 population, 50-74 years, adjusted for gender and age, number of patients and pop.

Comments

The use of biological drugs to treat the conditions in question in the elderly varies somewhat between hospital referral areas. The low number of elderly patients treated gives reason to believe that some of the variation observed is random. Most of the elderly patients treated with biological drugs suffered from rheumatic diseases of the joints and back (85%), chronic intestinal diseases (7%) and psoriasis (7%).

Rheumatic diseases of the joints and back are less dominant in the younger age group, and the proportion of patients treated for other diseases is higher. This could explain part of the difference in the treatment rates between the two age groups, but it cannot be ruled out that younger patients are prioritised for treatment with these expensive and strictly regulated drugs. This should be studied in more detail.