Improving mental health services in the Arkhangelsk region
by integration of primary and specialized mental health care services - model development, implementation and evaluation.

Present
What is the project about?

Mental health care in Russia has traditionally been provided by large psychiatric hospitals and specialized open services. This contrasts with the structure in Norway and many other countries, where mental disorders are more widely treated in the primary health services, and where the role of psychiatric hospitals have been reduced in favor of decentralized provision. A similar mental health care structure is now advocated by Russian health authorities and the project is assisting this development.

The quality of mental health care relates to the providers’ communicative, diagnostic and treatment skills, but is also strongly influenced by the quality of professional networks, both in terms of the accessibility of competent coworkers and specialists as well as their support and sharing when the individual provider is caring for individuals with mental health problems. Thus, the project is both aiming to improve GPs’ diagnostic and treatment skills, as well as to improve the cooperation between GPs and specialists in psychiatry.

Collaborating partners

Central Russian partners are The Ministry of Health in Arkhangelsk, The Neuropsychiatric Dispenser (DPS) in Arkhangelsk and the Northern State Medical University in Arkhangelsk. Norwegian partners are the University of Tromsø The Arctic University of Norway (Professor Tore Sørlie and Assistant Professor Grigory Rezvy), the University Hospital of North Norway (UNN) and Nordland County Psychiatric Hospital.

The project is officially a collaboration between the Ministry of Health in Arkhangelsk County and UNN. The project is funded through the Barents Health Programme (HOD) with 500,000 NOK for 2016 and there is close cooperation with another funded project related to the use of IKT in supervision and competence building in Arkhangelsk.

Why this project?
Mental disorders are leading causes of morbidity worldwide with twelve months prevalence rates about 25% in the general population. The burden of depression is particularly high and in Russia, there is a particularly high prevalence rates of alcohol abuse and suicidality.
The project will enhance both systemic (collaboration and competence networks among specialists and primary health care providers) and individual aspects (diagnostic and psychotherapeutic skills in primary health care providers) of psychiatric competence.

**What has been done?**
To improve the systemic aspects of psychiatric competence, the project has created and implemented an integrated model for cooperation between specialized psychiatric services (SMS), and primary health care (PHC) (The Pomor model). An evaluation program will identify effects both on a health service level, patient level and health provider level. In addition, a group of Russian general practitioners (GPs) have been taught in psychiatric diagnostics and psychological treatment of the most common mental disorders. These experiences have been disseminated at conferences and in publications. The Health Minister has decided that the Pomor model is to be implemented in the whole Oblast.

**What is SAG’s role?**
SAG participated in a meeting with the project’s working group in Tromsø April 2016, and a meeting with several of the members of the project group as well as the Minister of Health in Arkhangelsk county in Arkhangelsk in June 2016.
SAG can be of assistance regarding various guidance and advice.

**Status**
On-going.

In the process of establishing a Centre of Competence Development, and in the planning phase of establishing a Centre for Arctic Medicine; with epidemiological research as a main focus.
Research is on-going, and publications have been made.