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# Is there room for a nursing science community in a medical faculty?

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## OPINIONS

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Declared conflicts of interest: The authors are vice-dean and dean respectively at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo.

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**Our task is not to provide continuing clinical education of nurses. Nevertheless, a research-based and interdisciplinary nursing community will be found at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Oslo, also in the future.**

On 16 January 2020, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research published new regulations for master's degree studies in advanced clinical nursing [\(1\)](#). Shortly afterwards (1 February 2020), the Ministry of Health and Care Services approved a set of regulations that grants government approval as specialists to nurses who complete this training [\(2\)](#).

These two sets of regulations have engendered debate among doctors as well as in other medical communities [\(3, 4\)](#), even though the politicians and nurses appear to be in agreement regarding this new training [\(5\)](#). For the leadership of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Oslo, this matter calls for a clarification in principle of the kinds of studies that should be encompassed by our faculty.

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## A long tradition for nursing science

Nursing science was established as a subject to be taught at the University of Oslo in 1985. In 1993, the staff were transferred to the Faculty of Medicine and has since consolidated their position as a leading academic community in this discipline (6). From the beginning, a key remit for the nursing science community at the University of Oslo was to train teachers for Norwegian university colleges, which provided the basic training for this profession. Because of increasing competition from other institutions, the community has increasingly struggled to recruit students for their master's degree programmes. In parallel, our medical community has reinforced its emphasis on research training of nurses.

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## The medical faculty's profile

A 'strong research culture based on high scientific standards and ideals' (7) is a fundamental attitude and a comparative advantage for the University of Oslo in general and the Faculty of Medicine in particular. In its educational profile, the faculty has chosen to prioritise comprehensive professional studies and full master's degree programmes. Our solid research communities and disciplinary scope provide us with a unique opportunity to provide long, complex and research-based study programmes. In addition, this provides a basis for developing and providing study programmes at the master's and PhD levels that few other Norwegian institutions can match (8).

In contrast to other Norwegian institutions that also provide medical training, we have also kept our name as the *Faculty of Medicine*.

The nursing science community at the University of Oslo has been managed according to the same principles as the faculty as a whole. Since its inception, the community has focused on developing nursing as a *science*. The strong linkage between research and training has been this community's hallmark. In addition, it has made use of its advantage of being co-located with a medical faculty and a broad-based university by collaborating extensively with other scientific communities.

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## Nursing science at the Faculty of Medicine

The faculty leadership wants a strong nursing science community at the Faculty of Medicine. However, a continuation and development of this community's distinctive profile also call for a clarification of the division of labour with adjacent communities in other institutions. The Faculty of Medicine at the University of Oslo provides no basic clinical training of nurses, nor do we have this as an ambition for the future. Nor do we see it as our role to become a

faculty for clinically oriented continuing education. Institutions that provide basic training in nursing and have a better developed infrastructure for practical student exchange of nurses are better equipped to do this than we are.

Parts of the training in advanced clinical nursing are undoubtedly in full accordance with what we see as our social remit. The regulations on the national guidelines for the training say, for example, that it 'should provide a broad range of skills in handling nursing-related problems at the individual, group and system levels ... Furthermore, the training should provide in-depth knowledge of research methodology and key scientific theories and concepts ...' (1). Many of the topics that are highlighted in the regulations, such as coherent service provision, preventive health work, health technology and interprofessional collaboration, are also key priorities for the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Oslo.

*«The faculty leadership wants a strong nursing science community at the Faculty of Medicine»*

We are nevertheless of the opinion that if a faculty with our profile and structure should marshal such studies, they would need to be organised in collaboration with an institution that provides basic training in nursing. A study programme in advanced clinical nursing would entail a shift towards in more clinical and less research-oriented direction that what has traditionally been the educational profile of our nursing science community. We also hold it to be doubtful that our institution alone would be able to recruit a sufficient number of students to such a programme without any formalised collaboration with an institution providing basic training in nursing and the institutional loyalty this would entail.

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## **The road ahead**

We want our nursing science community to continue to exist and develop within the framework of the fundamental principles that always have characterised our faculty: we are a research-intensive medical university community that focuses on coherent professional studies and research-oriented master's degree programmes. As leaders of the faculty we will do our bit to ensure that the nursing science community at the Faculty of Medicine will remain able to uphold its strong position nationally and internationally and preserve the close linkage between teaching and research that characterises this community.

Even though it is not our remit to provide continuing clinical education of nurses, a research-based and interdisciplinary nursing science community will still have a natural home at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Oslo.

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Publisert: 7 May 2020. Tidsskr Nor Legeforen. DOI: 10.4045/tidsskr.20.0311

Received 6.4.2020, first revision submitted 30.4.2020, accepted 4.5.2020.

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