

## **The Meningococcal Project of Telemark 1987-2007**

Bjørn-Erik Kristiansen<sup>1,2</sup>, Andrew Jenkins<sup>1</sup>, Randi Kersten Aakre<sup>1</sup>, Anne Gry Allum<sup>1</sup>, Yngvar Tveten<sup>1,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unilabs Telelab, Skien, <sup>2</sup> Department of Microbiology, University of Tromsø, Norway, <sup>3</sup> Present address Sykehuset Telemark, Skien

The Meningococcal Project of Telemark (MPT) was initiated in 1987 to prevent secondary cases of meningococcal disease by identification and eradication of the disease causing strain in close contacts.

During the period 1987-2007, a total of 66 primary cases of meningococcal disease were bacteriologically verified in the county of Telemark (165.000 inhab.). No secondary cases occurred during this period. Depending of the expected prevalence of secondary cases, from 1,3 (prevalence 2 %) to 7,3 (prevalence 10 %) secondary cases were prevented. In the last case, the number of quality adjusted life years (QALYS) saved was calculated to 77 at an estimated net cost of 192.000 NOK (total costs of 661.500 NOK – saved hospitalization costs for 7 prevented patients of 469.500 NOK). Forty-one (62,1 %) of the patients were males, 25 (37,9 %) were females. Thirty-two (48,5 %) of the patients were 5 years or younger. The mean annual incidence of notified cases fell significantly from 3,52 (CI:2,13-4,91) during the first 10-years period (1988-1997) to 0,86 (CI 0,34-1,38) during the second period (1998-2007). No significant decline was seen in the neighbouring county of Vestfold (220.000 inhab.) between the two 10-years periods. Throat samples from 2252 close contacts were collected. The disease-causing strain was found in 70 (3,1 %) out of these 2252 contacts. The relative risk of being a carrier of the disease-causing strain was 8,52 in household-members and kissing contacts. We conclude that the Project may have prevented secondary cases of meningococcal disease.