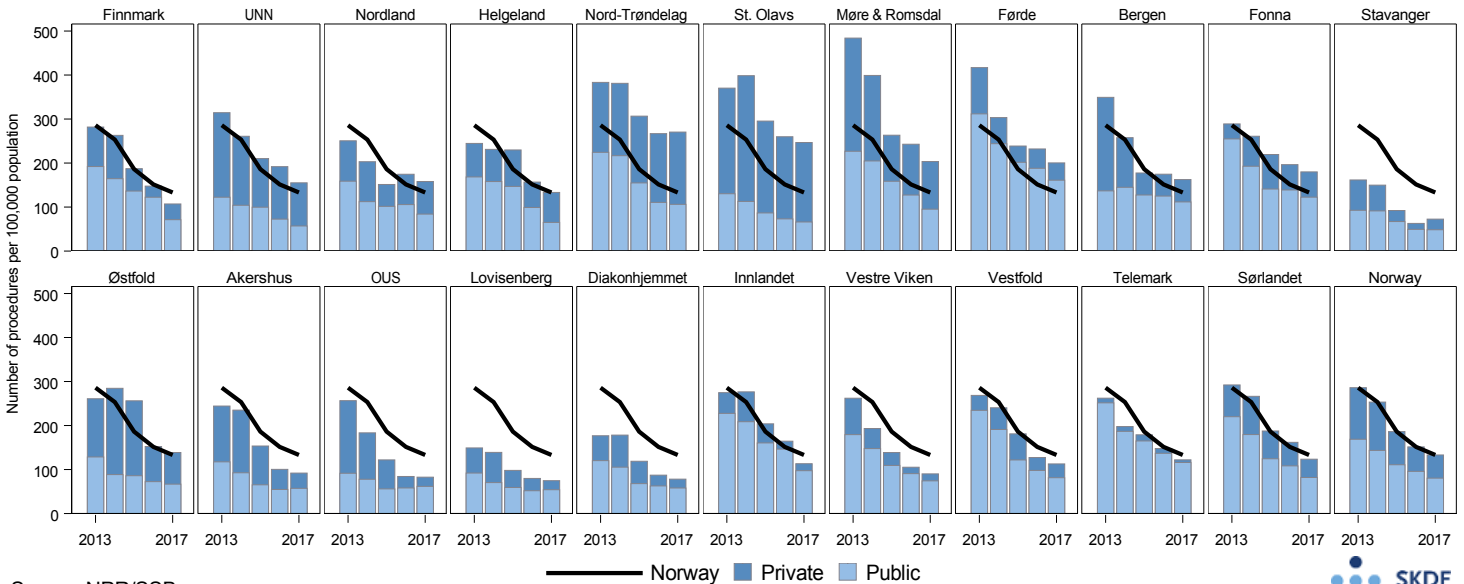


The menisci are fibrocartilage that protect the cartilage in the joint and help to stabilise the knee. The menisci can be damaged by an acute knee injury or as part of the development of arthrosis. Meniscus injuries in younger patients are treated with meniscus repair surgery or partial removal of the meniscus cartilage. Such treatment is most effective in the case of acute injuries. Partial removal of the meniscus cartilage entails a risk of early development of arthrosis. Meniscus complaints in persons older than 50 are often the result of wear and tear. The effect of surgical treatment is not scientifically well-documented in this group of patients.



Source: NPR/SSB

Menisci, development in the number of procedures per 100,000 population during the period 2013–2017, adjusted for gender and age. Broken down by hospital referral areas and public or private treatment providers.

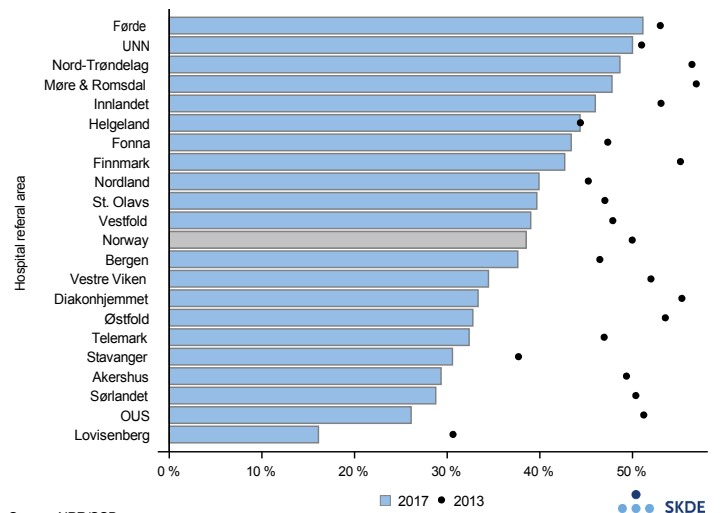
Development since 2013

The 2015 day surgery atlas showed extensive use of meniscus surgery and considerable variation between the health trusts' hospital referral areas. A total of 14,500 operations (adjusted rate: 286 per 100,000) were performed in Norway in 2013. During the period 2011–2013, inhabitants of Møre og Romsdal hospital referral area underwent more than four times as many procedures per 100,000 population as those resident in the Stavanger area. The variation was otherwise moderate.

During the period 2015–2017, 3.7 times as many procedures per 100,000 population were performed in Nord-Trøndelag hospital referral areas as in the Stavanger area.

The number of meniscus operations in Norway dropped sharply from 2013 to 2017. In 2017, 7,000 procedures were performed (adjusted rate: 133 per 100,000), which is less than half the number in 2013. Nationally, the decrease was the same for publicly funded private hospitals and specialists as it was for public hospitals. In the hospital referral areas OUS, Vestre Viken and Bergen, the biggest reduction in activity was at publicly funded private hospitals, while the reduction was greatest at public hospitals in Vestfold, Helgeland and Sørlandet hospital referral areas.

There is consensus in the medical community that degenerative meniscus will not normally be treated with surgery. The average age for patients underwent meniscus surgery decreased by 4.7 years from 2013 to 2017, and the number of procedures performed on patients over 50 years of age was reduced by 63%, from 7,200 to 2,700. The proportion of meniscus surgery on patients over 50 was significantly reduced, particularly in the South-Eastern Norway Regional Health Authority's hospital referral areas. It was nearly halved in the hospital referral areas of Akershus, Sørlandet, OUS and Lovisenberg, while remaining relatively stable for Førde, UNN and Helgeland hospital referral areas.



Source: NPR/SSB

Proportion of meniscus surgery patients who were more than 50 years old in 2013 and 2017.

Comments

There was a considerable reduction in meniscus surgery from 2013 to 2017, particularly for patients older than 50. This could indicate that far fewer operations were performed on patients with degenerative meniscus injuries in 2017 than in 2013, a development which is in line with medical recommendations. However, the proportion of older patients differed considerably between hospital referral areas. This is probably an important reason why the variation between hospital referral areas in the use of meniscus surgery was unwarranted also during the period 2015–2017.