



# Sahlgrenska International Care

## Annual and Sustainability Report 2023

# Table of contents

Introduction	4
Care	8
Education	12
Aid	20
Increased international cooperation	22
Sustainability report	30
Statistics	44

# About the annual and sustainability report

This is Sahlgrenska International Care's second integrated annual and sustainability report, the previous one was published in 2023. Our ambition has been to present a fair and inspiring description of our work and to provide a comprehensive picture of our opportunities and challenges, what we have achieved so far and where we are going.



The 5th of July a delegation of 42 doctors and nurses from more than 10 hospitals and universities in Ukraine visited Sahlgrenska University Hospital. The organization Help Ukraine Gothenburg assisted with interpretation support. [Read more](#)



We have prioritized **four of the 17 global goals** that Sahlgrenska International Care (SIC) can contribute most to. The sustainability goals are integrated into our business plan and will be a guiding tool for Sahlgrenska International Care's operations – where sustainability is a natural part. See our sustainability report on pages 30-43.

# Sahlgrenska International Care

Sahlgrenska International Care is Sahlgrenska University Hospital's center for international collaborations contributing to the development of healthcare – both locally and globally.



**Highly specialized care for international patients**



**Exchange programs for healthcare professionals**



**Specialist training programs for international doctors and dentists**



**Development cooperation for global health**



**Medical equipment aid**



**International partnerships** to improve healthcare for patients and staff in Västra Götaland, Sweden and the countries we work with.



## Vision

Sahlgrenska International Care's vision is for more people around the world to have access to care, the opportunity for good health and a good life.

# Sahlgrenska University Hospital

– Aiming to become Europe's leading university hospital by 2032

Sahlgrenska University Hospital has been here for almost 250 years. We care for the sick, conduct research and save lives around the clock, 365 days of the year. Today, healthcare can do things that we could only dream of yesterday.

We bring together the knowledge of thousands of people to provide the best possible care for our patients. We lead the world in research, innovation and education to shape the future of healthcare.

We are Sweden's largest hospital and one of the largest in Europe with the aim of becoming Europe's leading university hospital in 2032.

- Europe's most modern children's hospital
- The Nordic region's most complete transplant hospital
- Best in Sweden in clinical research
- Provider of national highly specialized care (NHV) in 35 areas
- Members of 13 European Reference Networks
- Own AI competence center and collaboration with Chalmers University of Technology
- ATMP center
- Precision medicine center
- Innovation Platform
- Specialist training (ST) in Innovation and Technology
- International Director of Studies



“ I strongly believe in cross-border cooperation and I see international partnerships as a crucial component for progress. Together we can reach the common goal of providing sustainable healthcare to our patients.

*Boubou Hallberg, CEO*

# 2023 – innovation in international partnerships

**In 2023, several new partners found us. At Sahlgrenska International Care, we are convinced that an innovative approach to international cooperation is the way forward. This year it was about exploring and implementing new forms of collaboration.**

## Iceland

Together with one of our largest partners, Landspítali University Hospital, we have taken several strategic steps to broaden the collaboration in several new medical areas such as cancer and gender affirming surgery. In transplantation, we are complementing our long-standing collaboration by offering a fellowship in transplantation surgery to support Iceland in finding a sustainable solution for the generational shift that is taking place in Icelandic transplantation medicine.

## Denmark

Before the summer of 2023, two regions in Denmark approached Sahlgrenska University Hospital with a request to refer a maximum of five patients for breast cancer surgery during the summer period. Together with Södra Älvsborg Hospital (SÄS), an agreement was signed. In the end, one patient from Denmark was referred and treated. This is one of several examples of the type of requests for cross-border specialist care that we see increasing.

## Finland

When a university hospital in Finland found it difficult to meet the care guarantee in a certain area of pediatric cardiac surgery, they turned to Sahlgrenska University Hospital, which was able to take on a limited assignment. This has not yet led to an actual collaboration, but may be possible in the future.

## France

Sahlgrenska University Hospital are pleased to have started a collaboration with the University Hospital of Bordeaux. As large university hospitals, we face several similar challenges and opportunities, not least as demographics and demand for care change. The collaboration will be launched in connection with President Macron's state visit in early 2024 and will focus on four areas: HR, sustainable healthcare, patient flows and outpatient care, and AI, Innovation and Data. The transformation of healthcare is happening here and now in our respective countries. By exchanging experiences, we can inspire each other to take bigger steps towards providing sustainable healthcare to our patients.

## Rwanda

This year, Sahlgrenska International Care has introduced an annual scholarship to promote ST exchanges between Sahlgrenska University Hospital and the university hospital, CHUK, in Rwanda. The scholarship enables one incoming and one

outgoing student to carry out a one-month exchange, primarily within the framework of their residency training. Read more about Inés who traveled to Rwanda to learn more about melanin-rich skin on pages 22-24.

## Thailand

This is the first time that Sahlgrenska University Hospital has signed a hospital-wide agreement for bilateral exchanges for residents. The choice fell on Mahidol University in Bangkok, Thailand, with which the University of Gothenburg has had an ongoing collaboration since 2017. The first exchange took place in 2023. Erik Andersson, resident physician in emergency care at Östra sjukhuset, did a four-week auscultation period in Bangkok in January. At the end of April, Chutchaiwat Savetamornkul, Dr Toon, resident physician in internal medicine, came to Gothenburg, read more about his meeting with Swedish healthcare in Sahlgrenskaliv: [Thailändsk blick på svensk sjukvård | Sahlgrenskaliv](#).

## USA

In October, Sahlgrenska University Hospital participated in a Swedish delegation trip to Boston and New York, organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Swecare. For us at Sahlgrenska University Hospital, the goal was to strengthen existing and build new bridges between our hospital and selected universities and university hospitals in the US and Canada, explore opportunities for collaboration in research and education and increase knowledge exchange in innovation, AI and digital health and precision medicine, read more on pages 26-27.

## Tip!



Listen to Swecare's podcast and the episode on [AI – A Blessing or a Curse?](#) where our very own hospital director and board member of Swecare, Boubou Hallberg, gives his views on AI in healthcare.

# Care

## Cross-border care

### – Increased demand for cooperation from university hospitals in the Nordic countries

For Sahlgrenska University Hospital, international cooperation is a crucial component in the work towards more sustainable healthcare. Requests from hospitals in neighboring countries have increased in 2023. As a university hospital, we welcome this as the Nordic countries need to cooperate more across borders to maintain and develop our highly specialized healthcare – for the benefit of our patients.

Examples of new requests, handled in 2023:

- Gender affirming surgery
- Breast cancer surgery
- Pediatric heart surgery
- Neurosurgery
- Cancer treatment Isolated Limb Perfusion (ILP) and Isolated Hepatic Perfusion (IHP).



Sahlgrenska International Care has also initiated in-depth dialog with:

- GUCH (Grown Up Congenital Heart Disease)
- Sahlgrenska Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Transplantation Center
- Intestinal failure center

The aim was to investigate the conditions for increased cross-border cooperation in the Nordic region in order to strengthen specialist care for these patient groups.

Margret Andresdotter, Chief of Nephrology and Dogg Hauksdottir, Director of Women and Children Services from Landspítali – The National University Hospital of Iceland during a visit to Queen Silvia's Children's Hospital in February.



## Digital solution launched to simplify administration

Significant steps have been taken to simplify and streamline the administrative process of referring patients from Iceland. Several parts of the information flow between referring hospitals in Iceland and Sahlgrenska University Hospital are now digital.

Sahlgrenska International Care receives referrals digitally and provides referral responses and feedback digitally via Hlada, a platform that Landspítali owns and shares with staff at Sahlgrenska. Sahlgrenska International Care, together with the Center for Digital Health at Sahlgrenska University Hospital, is seeking a similar solution to facilitate collaboration with other international partners in a similar way.

A lot is happening at EU level in the area

of data sharing in healthcare. Sahlgrenska International Care is eagerly watching the new European Health Data Space regulation and is looking forward to changes that can promote cooperation between healthcare systems in different countries.

Although intensive work is underway at Sahlgrenska University Hospital in this area, Sweden as a whole is far behind in development because there are difficulties in sharing data between different healthcare providers and across regional borders. We need to take big steps forward in the next few years to be able to share data in a secure and user-friendly way both nationally and internationally. Those of us working with international contacts on a daily basis know that our partners are asking for this.

### More people turn to SIC for guidance on international healthcare requests

As a competence center for questions about care in international contexts, Sahlgrenska International Care is used more than ever before by staff at both Sahlgrenska University Hospital and other hospitals in the region. In the past year, meetings and study visits have been organized at the hematology department, the referral portal, Ronald McDonald House, the abortion clinic and others, in order to jointly develop and quality assure the processes for international patients.





**582** international healthcare cases were handled, an increase of 11.3 percent compared to 2022.

- Healthcare requests ..... 314
- General advice to health professionals/individuals ..... 69
- Cross-border situations..... 55
- Administration ..... 46
- Insurance matters..... 29
- Icelandic patients who received planned care under the cooperation with Iceland ..... 69

## Top 6

departments that received the most international patients

- Transplant Centre
- Plastic surgery
- Women's health services
- Neurosurgery
- Intestinal Failure Centre
- Orthopedics (OI care)

**140** international patients received planned care, twice as many as the previous year.

Of these, **69** were Icelandic patients treated in collaboration with Icelandic authorities, an additional increase from previous years before the pandemic.

# Education

”My dream is to open an eating disorder center for research and treatment in Saudi Arabia”

**After eight years at Sahlgrenska University Hospital, doctor Abrar Alsharief is returning to her home town of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. With a double specialization under her belt, she will become the first child psychiatrist at her hospital. Her dream is to open a center to help children and young people with eating disorders.**

**Abrar Alsharief** came to Sweden in 2015 and started specialist training at Sahlgrenska University Hospital in the Specialist Medical Training Program, which is aimed at international students.

– I received a scholarship to come here and complete a five-year specialist training in pediatrics. Now it's been eight years and I also have a specialization in child psychiatry, she says.

#### How did that come about?

– When I did my specialization in pediatrics, I got into child psychiatry. I first thought that I would only do my three months there, and I didn't know much about that area.

I didn't think that you could understand people's diagnoses just by talking to them. But it turned out to be so unexpectedly fun and interesting, so I applied and got another scholarship.

#### Sought-after skills

After serving at Sahlgrenska University Hospital, it's now time for Abrar Alsharief to return home. A position as chief physician in pediatrics awaits her at the University Hospital in Jeddah, and with her specialist training in child psychiatry, her skills are in high demand.

– Adult psychiatry exists, but child psychiatrists are less common. When I come home now, I know that my boss is keen to make the best use of my skills. Child psychiatric care in Saudi Arabia is not so well developed, but a lot is happening there now and there have been real changes just in the years I've been in Sweden.

One of her most memorable experiences is the time she spent training in the eating disorder care at Sahlgrenska University Hospital.



The placement of Abrar Alsharief in eating disorder care at Sahlgrenska University Hospital has made a particular impression.

Eating disorders are a subject that is not talked about much in Saudi Arabia, she says, and it is something she would like to continue working on.

– It's very interesting to see the complex picture of these patients. They may have depression, anxiety and other diagnoses, and it's incredibly important to look at the whole package. Each patient has a personal treatment plan and as a team we have worked so well together, she says.

#### How would you like to continue working on these issues in your home hospital?

– My dream is to open an eating disorder center with research and treatment.

**Text: Karin Eurenus**

The article was published in Sahlgrenska University Hospital's digital magazine, Sahlgrenskaliv, in September 2023 – ["Den barnpsykiatriska vården i Saudiarabien är inte så välutvecklad" | Sahlgrenskaliv.](#)

# Facts: SMTP and psychiatry

**The Specialist Medical Training Program (SMTP) is Sahlgrenska University Hospital's specialist program for doctors trained outside the EU/EEA with a scholarship from an authority in their home country.**

In 2023, Sahlgrenska University Hospital had seven SMTP doctors in training in the following specialties:

- Child psychiatry (BUP)
- Eye care
- Urology
- Rehabilitation medicine
- AnOpIva
- Psychiatry
- Internal medicine

Psychiatry and especially child psychiatry is an undeveloped area of care in many countries. Sahlgrenska University Hospital offers high-quality specialized psychiatric care, but like other hospitals in Sweden, there is a need to develop its services to keep up with demands in care.

Since 2023, Region Västra Götaland, with Sahlgrenska University Hospital as the provider, has been authorized to conduct national highly specialized care for difficult-to-treat eating disorders in all age groups. One of Sahlgrenska University Hospital's goals with international collaborations is to help strengthen specialist care for patients in other countries through education. Sahlgrenska University Hospital has offered SMTP training places in psychiatry since 2015.

” For the child and adolescent psychiatric clinic at Sahlgrenska University Hospital, it has been very enriching to have the opportunity to offer a doctor from Saudi Arabia specialist training. It has given the clinic new perspectives on how to provide care, but also an increased understanding of cultural differences, which is very important for our specialty.

We feel that we can contribute and provide a good specialist training to the

individual that is completely consistent with the Swedish specialist training, while also adding something in the larger perspective, by helping to spread child psychiatric knowledge to a country that doesn't have this specialty.

**Jessica Svahn, Head of Section, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (BUP).**



## The orthodontic clinic's unique community made Hala and Aziz want to stay



**Hala and Aziz met at dental school in Saudi Arabia. They got married and thought they would to choose different paths, but both chose orthodontics. Hala, now a PhD student, inspired Aziz to apply for the Specialist Dental Training Program (SDTP), which she recently completed. Three more years await in an environment they describe as unique.**

Ever since Hala started the Specialist Dental Training Program (SDTP) in Orthodontics, she has had a clear goal in mind: to teach when she returns to Saudi Arabia. She also wants to try to recreate what she sees as a unique learning environment that the program managers and supervisors have been able to create here at the clinic in Gothenburg.

– I want to treat my future students the same way I have been treated here. There is a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, which I experienced right from the start, at my first interview. And even now as a PhD student, says Hala.

### Unique community

At the orthodontic clinic, some twenty different nationalities are represented. It's as if internationality is part of the clinic's DNA.

– Most people here are not 100% Swedish, so it's easy to fit in and feel welcome. And your supervisor is not only your supervisor, they also become like a friend as there are often social activities organized in and outside the clinic.

When it's time for exams, the supervisor has a tradition of writing a song about each person who graduates.

– It's personal, so it shows that they have really been interested in you. That they really know you, says Hala.

### Decided to stay

Hala graduated from the program in August 2023. When she was accepted into a doctoral program and her husband Aziz was accepted into the same orthodontic program she just completed, the family decided to stay in Sweden for a few more years. They considered a warmer country in a city with a direct flight home to Saudi Arabia, as the cold weather is something they still struggle with, as well as missing all there loved ones.

– Our daughter who goes to school here is doing so well. Staying felt like the best and most natural decision for the whole family, says Hala.

As a PhD student, Hala is researching cavities. More specifically, she is investigating the thesis that you can develop cavities regardless of your lifestyle, due to genetics.



Since research has shown that orthodontic patients are more prone to caries, this is a patient group she is looking at more closely.

### Two orthodontists in the family

Now both Hala and her husband Aziz are full-time students. As dentists, they have chosen the same specialty and one can't help but wonder how this came about.

– We got to know each other in dental school, but have always been prepared to choose different directions at specialist level, says Hala.

– I actually didn't think about choosing orthodontics before. But Hala inspired me! And one of the things that attracted me was actually the community at the clinic, replies Aziz.

– When we come back to Saudi Arabia, we choose different paths. I want to work only clinically with patients, while Hala wants to teach as well, says Aziz.

### First year at SDTP

It's been over four months since Aziz started the specialist program in orthodontics and he is starting to get into it.

– In orthodontics, I started from scratch. It feels like I am constantly developing and can almost work independently. Where I am now, compared to when I started, there really is a difference. My colleagues say the same, says Aziz.

– I like working as a dentist very much, as it's very much about building a relationship with the patient. Communication is key. And what I like specifically about orthodontics is that it's relatively bloodless, Aziz laughs.

– If you like communication, orthodontics is the right specialty. You really have time to get to know your patients, as you see them often, adds Hala.

### Meeting at home and at university

The fact that they are married and studying in virtually the same place has so far proved to be mostly positive.

– Since Hala has done the course, it is easy to share the experience with her. She motivates me, says Aziz.

### Fun memories

Language has been a source of laughter many times over the years in Sweden.

– Sometimes we meet patients who speak neither Swedish nor English. It goes without saying that this is a tricky situation. But the fact is that many patients only speak Arabic, so we don't even have to use our 'perfect' Swedish, Aziz and Hala say with a smile.

### Recommends Sweden – but warns of cold weather and complicated regulations

In three years, it will be time to go home to Saudi Arabia. To anyone thinking about Sweden, Gothenburg and doing their specialist training or doctoral studies here, they both say:

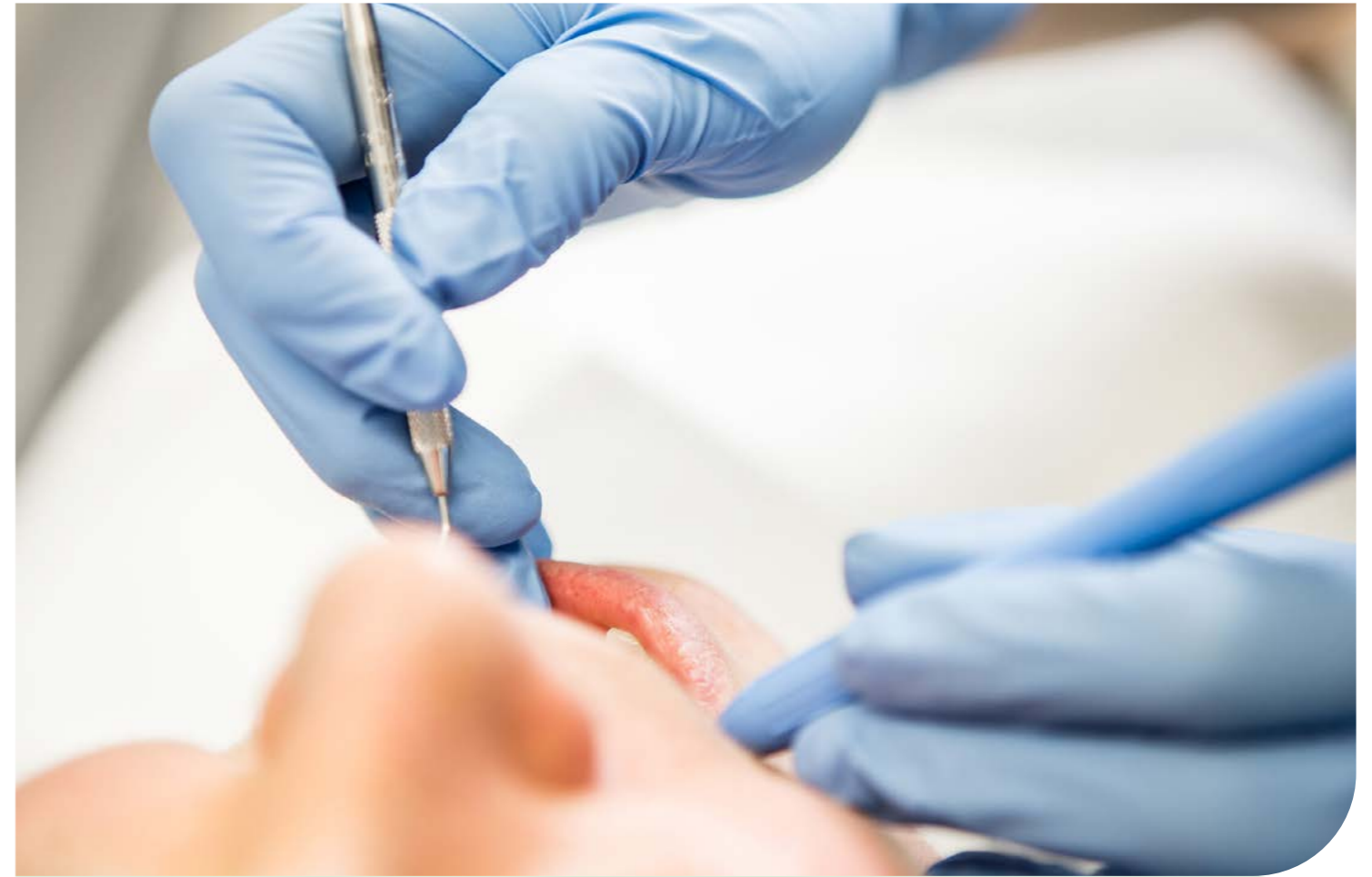
– We would really recommend it. Actually, you should choose where you apply based on which supervisor you get, because it's so important for the overall experience. And when it comes to that, you won't be disappointed.

They think Sweden is a safe country that's nice to live in. However, they miss more indoor activities for children and the family during the cold months. A lot in Sweden revolves around being outdoors in nature.

– Sledding in the snow definitely, but not every week, says Aziz.

Another thing they are not completely satisfied with is that certain regulations make it difficult for you to start your life here in Sweden. It has become more difficult for foreign students to open bank accounts, sign rental contracts or mobile phone subscriptions, and to buy or rent a car, to name a few examples.

– My brother could do all that in one day when he moved to the US, Aziz concludes.



## Facts

The Specialist Dental Training Program (SDTP) is a specialist program for dentists with funding from the home clinic or authority in the home country. The program is organized in collaboration between The Public Dental Service (Folktandvården), the University of Gothenburg and Sahlgrenska International Care at Sahlgrenska

University Hospital. In 2023, eight SDTP dentists were training, in the following specialist areas:

- Orthodontics
- Endodontics
- Periodontology

# Aid



## Course in trauma surgery for Ukrainian doctors

■ The war in Ukraine has put enormous pressure on Ukrainian society at all levels. Russia is ignoring international humanitarian law, the 'laws of war', resulting in attacks on hospitals, ambulances and medical staff. Combat injuries to arms and legs have increased significantly, and with it the need to develop trauma surgery skills among Ukrainian medical staff.

In cooperation with the aid organization Kristna Läkare och Medicinstudenter (KLM), SIC made it possible for a group of Ukrainian doctors to attend the course Upper Extremity Trauma: Acute and Reconstructive Surgery in Gothenburg.

After KLM and their sister organization in Ukraine together with several Ukrainian hospitals made a selection of participants,

Sahlgrenska International Care decided to finance the course fee and other ancillary costs for three Ukrainian surgeons. The course was given at the Surgical Anatomical Training Center (KAT) at Mölndal Hospital and was arranged by Sahlgrenska University Hospital and Sahlgrenska Academy.

In addition to participating in the course, the participants made study visits and interacted with colleagues from Sahlgrenska University Hospital.

– At home we do not have the opportunity to practice on real bodies, says Ivan Savka, a doctor at the hospital in Turiisk. Today I have learned techniques that I have never used before. It's very useful knowledge in my work, says Ivan, who is a surgeon in Ukraine.

### Read more:

[Ukrainska läkare lär sig operera vid Sahlgrenska Universitetssjukhuset - VGRfokus](#)

## Conference to rebuild health care in Ukraine

In December, Swecare and the Ministry of Social Affairs organized the Conference on Support to the Recovery and Development of Health Care in Ukraine. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the reconstruction of health care in Ukraine. Anders Lygdman, responsible for international aid at Sahlgrenska International Care, represented Region Västra Götaland and Sahlgrenska University Hospital and opened a session on the topic Training and Education.



### Read more:

[Konferens om stöd till Ukraina samlade hälso- och sjukvårdens nyckelaktörer - Regeringen.se](#)

### Focus on sustainability follow-ups particularly important when follow-up trips are not carried out

One area that has been left behind in 2023 is the practical follow-up in the field. Every year, Sahlgrenska International Care makes at least two follow-up trips with our partners to selected recipient countries to ensure that the activities we support work as promised. In 2023, this was not possible. The biggest contributing factor is that the

aid organizations SIC cooperates with have also been faced with financial challenges as a result of the global situation.

In years like this, there is a greater demand for detailed reporting from our partners, which we agree can be improved in dialog with them. Consequently, SIC has begun reviewing the contracts with the largest aid organizations this year, with sustainability taking center stage in the new agreements.



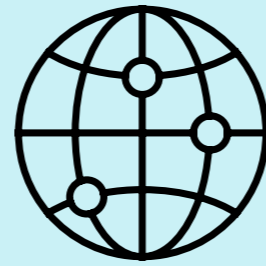
## KLM – Christian doctors and medical students

The organization was founded in 1938 and currently has around 500 members. They are involved in ethical issues such as euthanasia and gender dysphoria. Aid is another important part of their activities. They have hundreds of sister organizations around the world.

## Intervention in Turkey following earthquake

In early February, southeastern Turkey was hit by the worst earthquake since the 1930s, resulting in the death of around 50,000 people and massive destruction of homes and infrastructure. A major humanitarian response was launched by Turkey, the UN system, EU humanitarian actors and a number of international NGOs. Sahlgrenska International Care's partner Agape Foundation has long had a collaboration with the Swedish-Turkish Women's Association (STKF) and was able to contribute to the dispatch of two shipments of aid and supplies.

# Increased international cooperation



Sahlgrenska University Hospital has a strong international commitment. Many activities are underway to increase and coordinate the hospital's internationalization, under the leadership of the steering group for internationalization. In this section you can follow some of our employees around the world.



Inès Naouar (in the middle) with colleagues at the Military Hospital in Kigali.



## She wants to specialize on melanin-rich skin

**Knowledge of melanin-rich skin is low among Swedish dermatologists, which can lead to delays in diagnosis and treatment. Resident Inès Naouar wanted to do something about it and spent five weeks at a university**

**hospital in Rwanda to learn more. Her dream is to become a sub-specialist - and to contribute to equality of care.**

TEXT: MAJA LARSSON | PHOTO: PRIVATE

– After some time as a resident, I realized that there were knowledge gaps in the clinic regarding melanin-rich skin. We are very good at what we do, but when it comes to dark-skinned people, diagnosis can take longer, which in turn can delay treatment. This is unfair, says Inès Naouar.

### What are the reasons for this?

– We don't see as many patients with melanin-rich skin, although the number is increasing. This means that we don't know as much about how different conditions manifest themselves on non-light skin. The most famous books on dermatology are based on fair skin, for example.

You decided to do something about this.  
– Yes, when I was halfway through my specialist training, I went to Rwanda to learn more about melanin-rich skin. I was there for five weeks last summer to train at the university hospital and the military hospital in the capital Kigali.

### How did you get in touch with the hospital?

– It wasn't easy! I went to an evening lecture with Sahlgrenska International Care where they told me about the possibility of working in other countries. Unfortunately, they didn't have an agreement with any hospital in Africa, so I had to look for it myself, but I got a grant from Sahlgrenska International Care that covered accommodation and flights. Many hospitals

didn't even respond to my emails, others didn't have websites. But the hospital in Kigali responded. It was very well organized and I had a great time there. I would have liked to stay there even longer.

### What did you learn in Rwanda?

– I really got to see all kinds of conditions. Psoriasis, cancer, scabies, syphilis... I speak French, as did many of the patients, so it was easy to connect. I asked the patients for permission to photograph their skin and I had consent forms with me. In total, I took over 300 photos, which have already been very helpful. Eczema, for example, is something we see here at the dermatology clinic every day. But it looks very different on light and dark skin, and if you don't know that, it's hard to diagnose. I also got to see complications that we almost never see in Sweden, because we seek care much faster here. One example is HIV complications in the skin.

In addition to the medical aspects, it was also insightful to see how they work in Rwanda. They had less of everything: anesthesia, compresses, record keeping – but they did a fantastic job. One thing they did that I really appreciated was that every Friday the dermatologists got together to





The skin clinic at CHUK, University Hospital of Rwanda.

look at biopsies under a microscope. It was super exciting to see what the diseases actually look like in the skin.

**How do you share your new knowledge?**

– Everyone at the clinic knows that I have been to Rwanda to subspecialize, and I already get many questions from colleagues who want me to look at patients. I have lectured at the DVSS conference for nurses, and will lecture to nurses, assistant nurses, doctors and other staff at the dermatology clinic here at Sahlgrenska University Hospital. I have also talked to the head of the dermatology program at the medical school about lecturing on melanin-rich skin. This is actually in demand among the students.

**Do you feel ready now, or will you continue your work in some way?**

– No, this is just the beginning! In addition to my other interests in the skin, I would like to become a "subspecialist" in melanin-rich skin as well. There is one doctor in Stockholm who is specialized in this, but I'm sure more are needed. In the future I would like to do research on melanin-rich skin, preferably together with the hospital in Rwanda or other countries in Africa. Something I didn't think about before, but realized when I was there, is that even the African doctors only learn about white skin during their training. Even their textbooks focus on light skin – which they almost never see.

University Hospital's digital magazine, Sahlgrenskaliv, in September 2023 – [Hon vill specialisera sig på melaninrik hud | Sahlgrenskaliv.](#)

# Are you interested in travelling abroad as part of your traineeship?

In 2023, two new hospital-wide resident exchanges began, one with Mahidol University/Ramathibodi Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand and one with the University Hospital, CHUK, and the Military Hospital in Rwanda. For Rwanda, Sahlgrenska International Care has established an annual scholarship for one outgoing and one incoming student.

For more information, please contact the education manager at Sahlgrenska International Care: [Contact Us - Sahlgrenska University Hospital.](#)



Inès examines a patient at the skin clinic in Rwanda.

# SU in the USA

There is a lot going on between the USA and Sweden, not least in AI, Innovation and Digital Health.

With an AI Center and Innovation Platform as well as a major investment in digital health, Sahlgrenska University Hospital wants to strengthen existing and build new bridges with selected universities and hospitals in the USA. How? Join us on four different stops that were made during the year!

## AI research at Stanford



■ **Maria Sakalaki** is a doctor and has completed the specialization program "Innovation and Technology". Innovation and Technology. This summer she went to Stanford on an exchange to participate in a research project on cardiology, AI and the Apple Watch. The primary reason why Stanford is interesting is the proximity to Silicon Valley and the tech industry, where hospitals, universities and companies

are so close to each other. On site, she participated, among other things, in a small project around data collection through the Apple Watch Study.

One of the things the group looked at was whether the Apple Watch was as good as the long-term ECG tool used today. The purpose was not only to create their own project using traditional clinical research, but also to learn how they are using innovation and AI at Stanford and how far they have come. They also wanted to network, with the aim of increasing the exchange between Sahlgrenska University Hospital and Stanford. We're happy to say that the collaboration will continue after Maria's return to Gothenburg. In 2024, the second part of the research project will be carried out.

**Read more** about Marias research exchange with Stanford in SU's digital magazine: [Hallå där, Maria Sakalaki! | Sahlgrenskaliniv.](#)

## Post doc position in Cincinnati and manager at SU

■ Andreas Gremyr, unit manager at the e-psychiatry unit at SU has a post doc position at the Anderson Center for Health System Excellence, at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital, in the USA during 2023-2024. He does it part-time while working at SU. Mostly remotely, but with 2-3 visits per year, 2-3 weeks each time.

– Many of the ideas about knowledge management are inspired by theory and practice linked to the concepts of Learning Health Systems and Learning Health Networks. The Anderson Center for Health

System Excellence excels in developing such knowledge management through the creation of networks that span multiple sites, the use of common standards, follow-up, technology support, and improvement methodologies. In my research I study this and learn a tremendous amount. I benefit from some parts of it in my position as unit manager for the ePsychiatry unit, which has the task of supporting the development of psychiatry to become more of a learning health system.

## Swedish life science delegation to the USA – AI, innovation, digital health

■ In October a group from SU participated in a Swedish life science delegation to the USA (Boston and New York) on the theme of AI, Innovation, Digitization and Sustainability, which was led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Swecare.

The goal was to build connections between Sahlgrenska University Hospital and select US universities and hospitals to explore research and educational collaboration and share knowledge in innovation, AI, digital health, and precision medicine.

### Top three conclusions:

- It was valuable to be part of one of the world's most developed ecosystems for life science innovation.
- SU was confirmed to be far ahead, and in some areas even further ahead, than the US (e.g. quantum), but that some hospitals in the US have come further with the implementation of AI tools in healthcare due to, among other things, other prerequisites in regulations.
- Involving Vinnova and the embassy (Innovation and Research Council) was good, as they have local knowledge and are working to create better conditions for cooperation between Sweden and the USA. Important contact and link for continued dialogue.



**Next step:** Digital follow-up meetings with potential partner hospitals in early 2024!

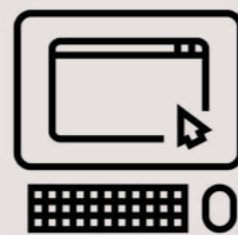
## Checklist for (sustainability) assessment of international development projects

Sahlgrenska International Care supports various international development projects that will contribute to the sustainable development of healthcare, promote global health and the increased internationalization of Sahlgrenska University Hospital. In 2023, a checklist that includes a sustainability assessment has been introduced, which has been used before all decisions on the allocation of SIC funds. Read more about which projects were granted support on p. 45



## Launch of the international page

In May, the intranet page "International" was launched with information about select parts of the international work that is going on at the hospital. The page contains information on hospital-wide as well as department-specific collaborations, exchanges for resident doctors and specialists (for example fellowships) and practical advice for employees who are considering an exchange or departments that want to receive colleagues from other countries.



# The steering group for internationalization

## In focus 2023

- Structure and coordinate the hospital's internationalization work
- Follow Sahlgrenska University Hospital employees' journeys out into the world, strengthen ties to certain markets/partners and test new forms of cooperation
- In the past year, Sahlgrenska International Care has hosted/participated in 10 international meetings with parties from Iceland, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Canada, El Salvador, Ukraine, Thailand, Ireland, USA and France.
- Sahlgrenska International Care has, together with the International Program Director, handled at least 25 requests from staff at Sahlgrenska University Hospital regarding placement abroad or educational exchanges since autumn 2022.
- Deepened collaboration with Sahlgrenska Academy's International Office and Internationalization Council.



## Sneak peek at focus areas in 2024

- Responsible internationalization
- Sustainable growth
- Long-term financing model

# Sustainability report

## Our focus area: Development of care – locally and globally


Sahlgrenska International Care will contribute to a more sustainable healthcare – on both a local and a global level. Through international collaborations, responsible resource management and investments in projects that promote global health, Sahlgrenska International Care strives to improve care in various ways for patients and employees in Västra Götaland, Sweden and in our collaborating countries.





## Goals and result





This table shows what Sahlgrenska International Care has accomplished with our partners in the past year and how they contribute to our own sustainability goals, which in turn are linked to VGR's sustainability goals and selected global goals.







- Green – This year's goal achieved
- Yellow – This year's goal partially achieved
- Red – This year's goal not achieved

Goal	Results year 2023 (2022)	Status	What we have done	Contributes to VGR's goals	Contributes to global goals
Contributing to specialist healthcare expertise in other countries	<p><b>Number of SMTP/SDTP participants who work in their specialty in their home country after having completed training</b> No aggregate statistics available.</p> <p><b>Number of doctors and dentists per specialist area</b> An/Op/ICU SU/S: 1 Urology: 1</p> <p>Medicine, Geriatrics and Emergency Department (MGAÖ): 1 Plastic surgery: 1 Eye care: 1 Neuromedical care: 1 Child psychiatry: 1 Psychiatry for affective disorders: 1 Orthodontics: 7 Periodontics: 1 Endodontics: 1</p>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<p>We know that several of our candidates are furthering their education in Sweden and other countries, but we don't have any aggregate statistics available at the moment. We work actively to obtain this information from our candidates in connection with their exit interviews. We also have plans to start up an alumni network.</p> <p>By training doctors from abroad, SU can contribute to increasing specialist care expertise globally, while at the same time provide new perspectives on the way care is provided in Sweden and contribute to an increased understanding of cultural differences. A current example is psychiatric care and especially child psychiatric care, which is underdeveloped in many countries.</p>	Good health and well-being	<p>SDG 3.8</p> 

Goal	Results year 2023 (2022)	Status	What we have done	Contributes to VGR's goals	Contributes to global goals
An education that attracts candidates from more countries	<p><b>Number of applicants per country</b></p> <p>75% Saudi Arabia</p> <p>25% The Nordic countries</p>		<p>The Specialist Dental Training Program (SDTP) has historically attracted candidates from a large number of countries, mostly from around Europe. This year had a lot of firsts. For the first time since 2015, a dentist was admitted to the specialist training in endodontics, and for the first time ever coming from Iceland.</p> <p>For the Specialist Medical Training Program (SMTP) the only applicants and admitted came from Saudi Arabia. The fact that the education is in Swedish is considered to be a limiting factor in SU's competitiveness internationally, as well as the fact that the market for specialist education is limited, which is why investment in advertising in social media has not yielded results. Therefore, SIC will invest in developing SU's fellowship offer, as it's shorter commitments of 1-2 years are deemed to be able to attract candidates from more countries.</p>	Equality and human rights	<p>SDG 3</p> 
An SDTP/SMTP training that promotes awareness of equality and human rights	<p><b>Number of those who have completed their training who feel that it increased their knowledge of equality and human rights in healthcare.</b></p>		<p>The SMTP and SDTP programs also focus on equality and human rights. To this end, a workshop on human rights was developed in collaboration with researchers and experts from VGR. Due to few people signing up, the workshop could not take place in 2023. The plan is instead to send invites when additional new students are accepted, in order to make this training module coming up early in the training program. The human rights workshop is already mandatory for the dentists and the goal is that it will eventually be mandatory for doctors as well.</p>	Equality and human rights	<p>SDG 4.8</p> 

Goal	Results year 2023 (2022)	Status	What we have done	Contributes to VGR's goals	Contributes to global goals
<p>Increase accessibility for international patients</p>	<p><b>Number of patients by area of care (top 6)</b>                      Transplantation: 45                      Plastic surgery: 28                      Women's health services: 17                      Neuromedical care: 11                      Orthopedics (mainly osseointegration): 10                      Intestinal failure: 5</p> <p><b>Number of patients by country</b>                      Iceland: 69 (31)                      Norway: 28 (19)                      Denmark: 10 (2)                      Spain: 6 (3)                      Finland: 5 (0)                      Poland: 5 (1)                      USA: 4 (3)                      Other countries: 13</p> <p><b>Number of international care cases per processing category</b>                      582 (523)                      See full list on p.12.</p>	<p>●</p>	<p>In addition to a record number of transplants, plastic surgeries and especially gender-affirming surgeries have been in particular demand this year.</p> <p>People in our neighboring countries are using more specialist care, which is positive as this helps make care more sustainable in the Nordics.</p> <p>There has been heavy pressure on SIC's care coordinators, who handled 11.3 percent more care cases than last year.</p>	<p>Equality and human rights</p>	<p>SDG 3</p> 
<p>Contribute to the strengthening of health systems in low- and middle-income countries</p>	<p><b>Breakdown by country/continent</b>                      58% Africa                      30% Ukraine                      12% Other countries</p>	<p>●</p>	<p>Aid to Ukraine is still the single largest per country. Largely due to the fact that two out of a total of four partners work exclusively with Ukraine and that approx. 40 percent of our largest partner's aid, Human Bridges, goes to Ukraine.</p> <p>However, the majority of VGR's aid still goes to sub-Saharan Africa, where most of our long-term development collaborations are located.</p> <p>Other countries include Romania and other countries in Eastern Europe, Turkey and El Salvador.</p>	<p>Good health and well-being</p>	<p>SDG 3.8, 3.C</p> 

Goal	Results year 2023 (2022)	Status	What we have done	Contributes to VGR's goals	Contributes to global goals
<p>Develop new collaborations with healthcare systems in other countries that promote global health.</p>	<p><b>Number of completed projects</b> 4 (2)</p> <p><b>Number of new agreements containing wording on equal rights and non-discrimination</b> 1 (1 )</p> <p><b>Number of new collaborations per healthcare area</b> 5</p> <p><b>Number of international development projects or initiatives funded by SIC's investment budget</b> 8</p> <p>See the complete list in the statistics section</p>	<p>●</p>	<p>Projects: two examples; In 2023, SIC began a collaboration with CHUK, the University Hospital of Rwanda. A resident doctor in skin and venereal diseases at SU was the first to go on an exchange. Her goal was to learn more about melanin-rich skin, an area where knowledge is low among Swedish dermatologists. In the long term, she wants to become a subspecialist and contribute to more equal care. First exchange with Thailand where residents in emergency medicine travelled to Thailand. Residents from Thailand have also been here in Sweden.</p> <p>Agreements: As an advisor to the plastic surgery department, SIC has helped include a clause on equal rights and non-discrimination when agreements were renewed with universities in Indonesia. New collaborations: In-depth dialog for increased cross-border cooperation in the Nordic region in order to strengthen specialist care for these patient groups.</p>	<p>Good health and well-being Equality and human rights</p>	<p>SDG 4 </p> <p>SDG 3.8, 3.C </p>
<p>Increased digitalization and secure information sharing.</p>	<p><b>Number of referrals that are processed digitally</b> 90 %*</p> <p>*Receiving referrals from external parties</p>	<p>●</p>	<p>In the past year, major steps has been taken to digitize the administrative process of referral management in order to achieve a more efficient and safe use of relevant resources. The number of digital care meetings has also increased.</p>	<p>Low climate impact</p>	<p>SDG 12.6 </p>
<p>Developing digital forms of training to reduce the carbon footprint</p>		<p>●</p>	<p>A digital course or master class for dentists in Japan was underway, but Swedish prices were not in line with what course participants in Japan were used to paying. The managers of specialist care do not see digital courses as a focus area at present, although they are open to lending lecturers to existing courses abroad.</p>	<p>Low climate impact</p>	<p>SDG 12.6 </p>

Goal	Results year 2023 (2022)	Status	What we have done	Contributes to VGR's goals	Contributes to global goals
<p>Contribute to a more responsible resource utilization through increased reuse of medical equipment</p>	<p><b>Donated key products (beds, wheelchairs, ultrasound machines).</b></p> <p>Beds: 383 (572) Wheelchairs: 916 (730) Ultrasound machines: 10 (15)</p> <p><b>Donated products by category (Basic equipment, advanced equipment, and aids)</b></p> <p>Statistics not available.</p> <p><b>Number of follow-up trips with partner organizations</b></p> <p>0</p> <p><b>Prominent donations or contributions</b></p> <p>1 fully equipped ambulance from SÄS. 30 operating tables from NU Hospital Group (Uddevalla).</p>		<p>This year, the NU Hospital Group and SÄS have provided the most notable donations.</p> <p>Follow-up trips have not been possible, making us rely more on reporting from our partners. However, assuring quality in crucial parts of the process has become more difficult, among which the most important parts are ensuring that equipment gets delivered and has the intended effect in relation to the identified need.</p>	<p>Resource-efficient and toxin-free</p>	<p>SDG 12.6</p> 
<p>Enhance the monitoring of sustainability efforts</p>	<p><b>Number of sustainability reports</b></p> <p>2 (1)</p> <p><b>Impact of efforts on healthcare professionals/residents/healthcare locally and globally</b></p> <p>Cannot be measured due to insufficient data.</p>		<p>In 2023, SIC is reporting its sustainability efforts for the second year in an integrated annual and sustainability report. Documenting the impact of our efforts together with partners this past year has been challenging, mainly due to the inability to conduct follow-up trips. Increased transparency in this area is necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability work.</p>	<p>Good health and well-being</p> <p>Equality and human rights</p> <p>Resource-efficient and toxin-free</p>	<p>SDG 12.6</p> 
<p>Sustainable travel</p>	<p><b>Carbon offsetting for international flights</b></p> <p>19 KSEK (18,5 KSEK)</p> <p><b>Breakdown of transport modes for business trips within the Nordic region</b></p> <p>Trains: 100%</p>		<p>SIC has made fewer long-distance trips than usual this past year, while the number of participants on each trip has increased. Overall, the climate impact though to be at the same level as the previous year. SIC offsets the carbon footprint for all international flights for its own employees, other SU employees, and incoming participants from low- and middle-income countries in the projects sponsored by SIC. All domestic travel was conducted by train.</p>	<p>Low climate impact</p>	<p>SDG 12</p> 

Goal	Results year 2023 (2022)	Status	What we have done	Contributes to VGR's goals	Contributes to global goals
<p>Develop partnerships that promote sustainable development of healthcare internationally</p>	<p><b>Participation in national and international arenas</b></p> <p>2</p>	<p>●</p>	<p>Participation in the Swedish life science delegation to the USA (Boston and New York) from October 16th to 20th, focusing on AI, Innovation, Digitalization, and Sustainability, led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Swecare.</p> <p>Sahlgrenska International Care represented SU at the conference "Support to the Recovery and Development of Health Care in Ukraine," organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Swecare in December.</p>		<p>SDG 17.6</p> 

# Sustainability analysis

**Our sustainability work is constantly developing, just like our other business areas. Every year, Sahlgrenska International Care tries to take bigger steps towards a sustainable healthcare. Challenges will always make themselves known along the way, and we will analyze the biggest ones in this section. When looking back at the past year, the overall picture is that our sustainability work has been strengthened in several ways, but there has also been a decline in one area.**

## **Follow-up of the impact on healthcare needs to be strengthened**

We have observed that Sahlgrenska International Care has declined in one area in particular, namely the follow-up of the impact our efforts have had on healthcare staff, people and health-care on a local and global scale. The fact that on-site follow-up in recipient countries for Region Västra Götaland's aid has not been possible means that a greater emphasis has been placed on feedback from our partners. However, important parts of the process have become more difficult to follow-up, such as ensuring that equipment gets delivered and that it has the intended effect in relation to the identified need. It's also become more difficult to follow-up on work with partners and local partners on the ground in the recipient countries, and how to work through practical problems. For increased transparency, in addition to starting the follow-up trips again, Sahlgrenska International Care needs to implement the focus on sustainability in the report from our partners when drafting new agreements.

In the coming years, SIC also needs to create a better overall picture of how our training programs contribute to increasing specialist care competence in other countries. We know that they contribute to raising competence in areas that are underdeveloped in many countries, such as psychiatry, but access to more data is needed.

## **Changes in the environment affect access to care**

As an internationally involved actor, we closely monitor developments around the world. In 2023, these things stood out:

- The high inflation and a weaker Swedish krona
- The image of Sweden that has changed in some parts of the world
- Regulatory changes. For example, tightened abortion legislation in the USA, while Poland has moved towards easing the same legislation. European Health Data Space; new gender identity law in Sweden

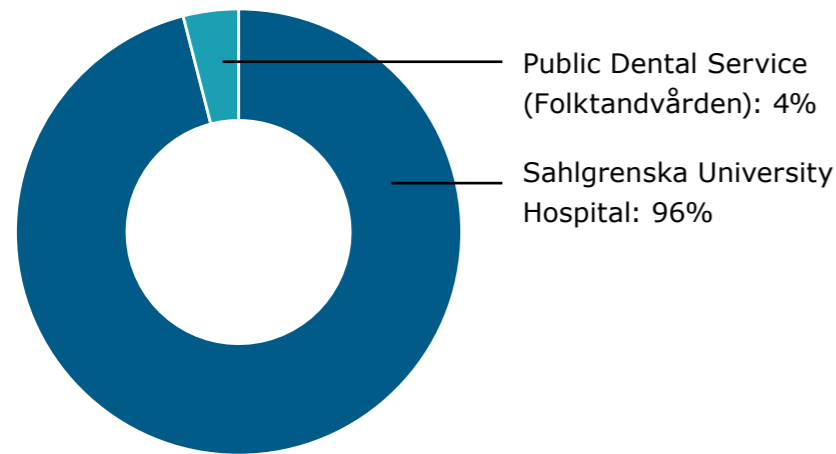
As the first point of contact for international patients for planned highly specialized medical care at Sahlgrenska University Hospital, we inform patients of their rights and obligations. Over the past year, we've made sure we're up to date on the latest guidelines to help us give our patients the best information and guidance, for example in gender-affirming surgery and abortion issues. By increasing the availability of certain care at Sahlgrenska University Hospital for international patients, we have taken steps towards a more equal healthcare, based on what is possible with current regulations. The problem is that there is sometimes room for interpretation, which makes it particularly important to regularly stop and make ethical and legal considerations in consultation with experts.



# Statistics

**Total turnover: 61.2 million | Result: 5.3 million**

## Turnover – share of sales

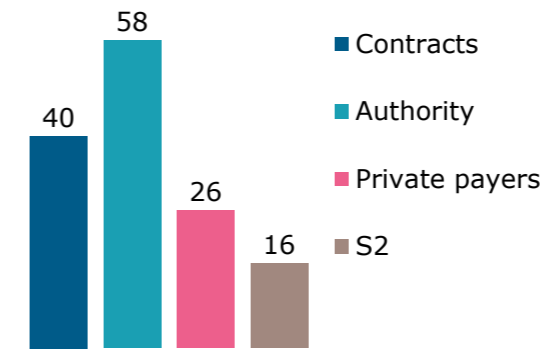


## Number of patients by country

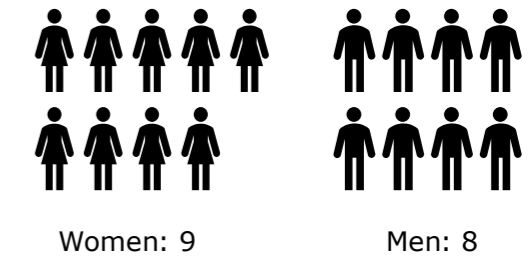
Country	Number of patients
Iceland	69
Norway	28
Denmark	10
Spain	6
Finland	5
Poland	5
USA	4
Other countries	13
<b>In total</b>	<b>140</b>

**Number of days of care: 432**

## Payment category healthcare:



## SMTP/SDTP – women/men



## International projects/activities that received SIC funding

- Scholarship Thailand (outbound and inbound, ST exchange)
- Marketing trip Thailand
- Scholarship Rwanda (outbound, ST exchange)
- Scholarship Rwanda (incoming)
- Sponsorship Intestinal Failure Center and Transplantation Center's 25th anniversary
- Sponsorship Roger Olofsson Bagge's participation at the Nordic Melanoma Meeting in Iceland, lecture on ILP/IHP
- Swedish Life Science Delegation to the USA on the theme of AI, Innovation, Digitization and Sustainability
- Distribution departments at SU that participated in the export of care and education services

## Climate compensation

Account of climate compensation for booked international air travels.

Destination	Amount (SEK)
USA	9,000
Egypt	2,000
Rwanda	2,000
Poland	4,000
Iceland	1,500
Norway	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,000</b>



# Balance sheet

Amounts in thousands of SEK	December 2023	December 2022
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Inventories	0	7
Shares and units	0	0
<b>Total fixed assets</b>		
Accounts receivable	17 076	3 550
Other receivables	5 262	2 280
Prepaid expenses and accrued income	9 490	14 646
Cash and bank balance	2	2
<b>Total current assets</b>	31 830	20 478
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>31 830</b>	<b>20 485</b>
<b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>		
Equity capital, free	13 844	8 491
Equity capital, restricted	-	-
Results	5 284	1 975
<b>Total equity</b>	19 128	10 466
Liability Parent bank	-	-
Accounts payable	145	18
Other short-term liabilities	2 560	4 136
Accrued expenses and deferred income	4 713	5 865
<b>Total short-term liabilities</b>	7 418	10 019
<b>TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>	26 546	20 485

# Income statement

Amounts in thousands of SEK	Outcome 2022	Outcome 2021
<b>INCOMS</b>		
International patients	54	35
	772	15
		7
International education	5 021	6 088
International medical equipment aid	1 374	1 354
International missions	-	-
Other income	1	0
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>61 168</b>	<b>42 599</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
International patients	-44 766	-30 240
International education	-3 849	-4 536
International medical equipment aid	-	-
International missions	-	-
Staff costs	-4 406	-4 208
Facility costs	-173	-431
Marketing/Travel costs	-1 215	-268
Other costs	-1 525	-934
Doubtful accounts receivable/customer losses	-	-
Depreciation	-3	-8
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>-55 937</b>	<b>40 625</b>
<b>OPERATING PROFIT</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
Interest income	53	2
Interest costs	0	1
<b>Total financial items</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>RESULT AFTER FINANCIAL ITEMS</b>	<b>5 284</b>	<b>1 975</b>
Untaxed reserves	0	0
Taxes for the year	0	0
<b>RESULT FOR THE PERIOD</b>	<b>5 284</b>	<b>1 975</b>

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