

## Patient Participation in Healthcare Practice in Greenland: Local Challenges and Global Reflections

Various kinds of user and patient involvement are spreading in healthcare in most Western countries. The purpose of this study is to critically assess the actual conditions for patients' involvement in healthcare practice in Greenland and to point to possibilities for development. Patients' perspectives on their own conduct of everyday life with illness and their possibilities for participation when hospitalized are examined in relation to the conditions in a hospital setting dominated by biomedical practice. On a theoretical level, it is argued that the concept of 'participation' is preferable to the concept 'involvement' in healthcare. The study shows that there are several interconnected areas for development: the structural frames of hospital practice, including professionals' possibilities for handling patient participation, and the agency of the patients conducting their everyday lives when hospitalized. Consequences of the biomedical hegemony are discussed in relation to WHO's broader approach to disease, illness and health and the still existing postcolonial traces of power and hierarchy. Finally it is argued that patient participation during hospitalization will promote the patients' conduct of everyday life, the cultural knowledge of the professionals, and the democratization of the healthcare sector. Such changes might be connected to a more encompassing democratic societal development – in Greenland as well as globally.

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