
Anne Lise Ryel receives a Medal of Merit from The King of Norway



The honors were given to Anne Lise Ryel in Oslo this week, and she was praised for her exceptional effort for the cancer cause and for battling social inequality. © Norwegian Cancer Society.

This week, Anne Lise Ryel, President of the NCD Alliance and former Secretary-General of the Norwegian Cancer Society, received the King's Medal of Merit and a diploma from the King of Norway for her life-long work on cancer and social issues.

During her function as Secretary-General, Anne Lise could witness an increase in survival for cancer patients from around 60 percent in 2002 to more than 75 percent in 2020, and the Norwegian Cancer Society could annually distribute approximately NOK 230 million to research that ensures future progress.

Tuesday this week, Anne Lise's invaluable contribution to fewer people getting cancer, to more people surviving the disease, and to a better quality of life for the survivors and their relatives was recognized and honored with the King's Medal of Merit.

"Your efforts for the Norwegian Cancer Society and its cause have been characterized by great courage, drive and a strong will - to make things happen. We are many who want to thank you for the achievements you have made for the benefit of the Cancer Society, the cancer cause, patients, relatives, and society", said Geir Riise, chairman of the Norwegian Cancer Society, when Anne Lise received the King's Medal of Merit Tuesday afternoon.

Open about cancer diagnosis

As Secretary-General, Anne Lise raised several issues that previously had received little attention. She emphatically put death, long-term injuries, and the importance of early detection on the agenda. She made sure that the Norwegian Cancer Society established ward centers at seven hospitals and that cancer coordinators were employed around the country. She was a driving force behind the introduction of patient pathways in the health service, and she always promoted the users' voice.

"I am overwhelmed and happy. Thank you so much", said Anne Lise.

Throughout her career, Anne Lise was particularly concerned with counteracting social inequality. Everyone, regardless of resources and social background, should have access to the best cancer treatment and care. In dialogues with researchers, politicians and other decision-makers, she always put the users' needs at the center.

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When Anne Lise took over as Secretary-General, cancer was still a disease associated with much shame. That she chose to share her story when she herself was affected by breast cancer, contributed greatly to shattering myths and breaking down taboos.

International recognition

Anne Lise did not limit herself to working for the cancer cause nationally. Through several international positions (amongst them board member in UICC and NCD Alliance, now as president), she ensured that Norway's resources and knowledge came in handy in countries with greater challenges in the field of cancer. She was also concerned with public health in general and contributed greatly to creating awareness about other non-communicable diseases and antibiotic resistance.

The King's Medal of Merit was established by King Haakon VII on 1 February 1908. It is awarded for efforts of a particularly beneficial nature socially in areas such as art, culture, science, business, and social and humanitarian work.

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