GREENLAND CENTER
OF HEALTH RESEARCH

Institute of Health and Nature
Ilisimatusarfik - University of Greenland

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Our vision at Greenland Center for Health Research is improving the health status in Greenland through initiation and coordination of health research. Building local capacity through PhD programs and mentoring is important. We do this in collaboration with other universities and our affiliated researchers, where we yearly organize PhD courses.

The vision for Greenland Center for Health Research will follow the key points from Greenland Research Strategy: Research must be anchored in Greenland, Research must support sustainable societal development, Research results must be easily accessible to all, and Research efforts must be at an international level.

The NUNAMED 2025 conference, with more than 460 participant. This Year`s theme, Education and Future, brought together healthcare professionals, educators and Researcher to explore how education can drive innovation and improve health outcomes across the Arctic region.We worked toward a healthier future for the Arctic.

The EU project, ArcSolution General Assembly 2025 brought around 30 partners together at NMBU Ås from 16–18 September. Study in Greenland is getting underway We are now getting ready to start the planned ArcSolution work on brown adipose tissue (BAT) physiology in the Greenlandic population, involving the MD Iluuna Møller and Mette Motzfeld Jensen. Using a simple infrared camera to measure heat production during mild cold exposure, the team will explore how BAT varies across communities and how factors like age, gender, genetics, lifestyle and environment might influence this natural cold-adaptation.

The Thematic Network on Health and Well-being in the Arctic is one of the four founding University of the Arctic Thematic Networks (UArctic TNs), established in 2005. In 2025, the network proudly celebrates its 20th anniversary.The (UArctic TNs) is lead from the Institute.

A total of 18 international PhD students from Greenland, Canada, New Zealand, The Faroe Islands, and Denmark participated in the PhD course focusing on the concept of One Health, planned by the Institute in relation to NUNAMED

The center is active in teaching at all levels from classroom teaching of nursing students to supervision of PhD students. We plan for yearly PhD courses, including lectures from leading Arctic scientists. In 2026 Greenland Center for Health Research will continue in collaboration with Greenland's healthcare system and communities to plan research important for Greenland, and in the planning phase also make a plan for the implementation of results and that research is focusing on topics and questions proposed by Greenland's healthcare system and communities.

Gert Mulvad, Chair, MD, Dr. h.c.

THE HISTORY OF GREENLAND CENTER OF HEALTH RESEARCH

On the 28th of May 2008, the Greenland Center for Health Research (GCHR) was established. Back then research-interested professionals working in the Greenlandic healthcare system had been discussing how a health research institute physically placed in Greenland was lacking. The ambition was that such an institute could facilitate the transfer of competencies to Greenland, be the base for PhD students, provide affiliated researchers with a Greenlandic identity for their international research network, and provide evidence-based content for the nursing education, health professionals' training and perhaps at some point arctic MPH and PhD educations. In 2013 the center was incorporated into the Institute of Health and Nature at Ilisimatusarfik under the name Greenland Center of Health Research. Since 2008, 16 PhD students have graduated from the center and currently 12 PhD students are affiliated with the center.

Our vision

Improving the health status in Greenland through initiation and coordination of health research.

Our mission

- Increase coordination among research institutions
- Develop, exchanging, disseminating and applying scientific knowledge
- Create national and international networks
- Build local capacity through PhD programs and mentoring
- Improve community involvement and local partnerships

Our objectives

The aim of the center is to enhance cooperation between researchers from other countries and health professionals in Greenland, to facilitate research cooperation within Greenland, and to facilitate the interaction of researchers from other countries with the Greenland community at large. The center is active in teaching at all levels from classroom teaching of nursing students to supervision of PhD students. In a longer perspective, the center will work for the establishment of data archive and archive of specimens collected in Greenland.

ADVISORY BOARD

- Gert Mulvad, MD, Dr. h.c. (Chairman)
- Lone Nukaaraq Møller (Vice chairman) Head of Institute, Institute of Health and Nature
- Ella Skifte, Chief Nurse, Board of Health and Prevention
- Paneeraq Noahsen, Chief Medical Officer
- Aka F. Olesen, Head of Department for Health
- Kunuk Holm, Research Coordinator at Department of Research
- Lene Seibæk, Professor, Institute of Health and Nature
- Appointed: Michael L. Pedersen, MD, GP, PhD, Dr. Med., Greenland Centre for Health Research

RESEARCHERS & PHD STUDENTS

Researchers

- Anders Koch, MD, PhD, Professor, MPH
- Aviaaja L. Hauptmann, PhD, Adjunct
- Bibi Hølge-Hazelton, PhD, RN, Professor
- Birgit Niclasen, Adjunct
- Christina VL Larsen, PhD, cand. scient. soc., Professor
- Christine Ingemann, BScN & (Res)MSc Global Health, PhD
- Carsten Juul Jensen, PhD, Associate professor
- Eva C. Bonefeld-Jørgensen, PhD, Professor
- Gert Mulvad, MD, GP, Doctor h.c.
- Hjalte Erichsen Larsen, MD, PhD
- Ingelise Olesen, Research Coordinator
- Ivalu Katajavaara Seidler, Cand.Scient.San.Publ., PhD
- Julie Flyger Holflod, Cand.Scient.San.Publ., PhD
- Jørgen Bjerggaard Jensen, dr. med.
- Karen Bjørn Mortensen, MD, PhD
- Karsten Rex, MD, GP, PhD
- Lene Seibæk, PhD, RN, Professor
- Lise Hounsgaard, PhD, RN, Senior Researcher
- Marit E. Jørgensen, MD, PhD, Professor
- Mette Malene Motzfeldt Jensen, MD, PhD
- Mette Schlütter, PhD, Anthropology
- Michael Lynge Pedersen, MD, GP, PhD, Dr. Med., Professor
- Nadja Albertsen, MD, PhD
- Nick Duelund, MD, PhD
- Nils Skovgaard, PhD
- Ninna Senftleber, Postdoc, PhD
- Preben Homøe, MD, PhD, Dr. Med.
- Rebecca Paarnannguaq Berg, dyrlæge, PhD
- Ruth Montgomery-Andersen, DrPH
- Sonja Sørensen, Research Assistant
- Stig Andersen, MD, PhD, PGCME, Clinical Professor
- Stine Byberg, PhD
- Tenna Jensen, PhD, Associate Professor
- Tine Aagaard, RN, PhD, Senior Researcher
- Trine Jul Larsen, BScN & MSc Public Health, PhD
- Ulla Wewer, MD, DMSc, Professor
- Umbreen Yousaf, MD

PhD students

- Maja Hykkelbjerg Nielsen, MScPH/Cand.Scient.San.Publ
- Emma Vitale, MA Archaeology
- Mads Bjørn Bjørnsen, Cand. Scient. Biology
- Mads Mose Jensen, MD
- Mie Møller, MD
- Nathalie Demuth Fryd, MD
- Paneeraq Noahsen, MD
- Bodil Dalsgaard Hoffmeyer, MD
- Helene Nielsen, MSc
- Michael Jensen, cand. psych.
- Mathilde Tuborg, MD
- Anja Jørgensen, MD

PhD Committee of Institute for Health and Nature

- Lene Seibæk, professor, PhD, Institute of Health and Nature, Ilisimatusarfik & senior researcher at Aarhus University Hospital (chair).
- Aviaja Lyberth Hauptmann, PhD, postdoc, Associate Professor, Institute of Health and Nature, Ilisimatusarfik.
- Michael Lynge Pedersen, professor, dr.med. Steno Diabetes Center Greenland and Institute of Health and Nature, Ilisimatusarfik/ University of Greenland.
- Magni Mohr professor, PhD. Dean at Faculty of Health Sciences and vice-rector for Research and Enterprise, Fróðskaparsetur Føroya/ University of Faroe Islands.

PhD enrolment at University of Greenland

The aim of the PhD education is to qualify students to perform research, development, and instructional tasks, and to transmit scientific problems and issues in the Arctic. The PhD School at Ilisimatusarfik/University of Greenland offers international research education in three different programs:

1) Arctic Studies - Health and Social Conditions
2) Arctic Studies - Pedagogy and the Science of Education
3) Arctic Studies - Culture, Language and Social Conditions

All PhD students must be assigned to one of these programs. Further, it is possible to make partnership agreements between the PhD School and other research institutions and foreign universities e.g. regarding double enrolment (double /joint degree). The application rules and form to apply for enrolment as a PhD student at Ilisimatusarfik are available at the university website www.uni.gl.

Please feel free to contact the PhD school at phd@uni.gl or chair of the PhD Committee, Institute for Health and Nature, at Ilisimatusarfik Lene Seibæk lese@uni.gl

CENTRE ACTIVITIES IN 2025

Arc Solution

The ArcSolution General Assembly 2025 brought around 30 partners together at NMBU Ås from 16–18 September. The meeting opened with a welcome from the NMBU Faculty Dean and a moment of silence in memory of our late scientific coordinator, Jon Øyvind Odland. The consortium also welcomed the Faroe Islands Hospital Service (NHF) as a new partner. Over two days, partners shared updates from across the project, highlighting how different activities—from citizen science and community engagement to field sampling and pollutant studies—interconnect to advance our goals. Constructive feedback from External Advisors emphasised the importance of linking work packages, integrating local and Indigenous perspectives, and being more specific with the description of some of the research activities. The Advisor comments will be followed up and discussed further in a dedicated online workshop (9th December 2025) and subsequent meeting with the Advisors (7th January 2026).

Study in Greenland is getting underway. Our partners at the University of Greenland (UGR) are now getting ready to start their planned ArcSolution work on brown adipose tissue (BAT) physiology in the Greenlandic population, involving the ECRs Iluuna Møller and Mette Motzfeld Jensen. Using a simple infrared camera to measure heat production during mild cold exposure, the team will explore how BAT varies across communities and how factors like age, gender, genetics, lifestyle and environment might influence this natural cold-adaptation. The study uses cold-exposure tests, small finger-prick blood samples and brief lifestyle questionnaires. The results will help us better understand how environmental changes and pollution interact with human physiology in Arctic communities.

Report from Nuuk PhD Course On 1–2 October 2025, the Greenland Centre for Health Research at Ilisimatusarfik (University of Greenland - UGR) hosted a PhD course on One Health in the Arctic. The course highlighted the links between human, animal, and environmental health, and included lectures, group work, and discussions on Arctic health challenges such as zoonotic diseases, contaminants, and climate impacts.
ArcSolution contributed to the course through experts lectures by Arja Rautio and Gert Mulvad, who helped guide students and connect the One Health approach to their own research. Participants also practiced presenting their projects in short talks at the NUNAMED 2025 conference.

NUNAMED 2025

Since 1991, NUNAMED conference has been held approximately every three years, attracting 200–250 participants, primarily from Greenland and Denmark. The academic content of NUNAMED includes keynote lectures, thematic and debate sessions.
In 2003, NUNAMED was organized as part of ICCH12, with participants from across the Arctic region and Scandinavian countries. Since 2003, the number of participants from countries outside Greenland and Denmark has been increasing.
The objectives of the NUNAMED conference is to:
- Present current Greenlandic medical research findings.
- Debate current Greenlandic medical research questions in a multidisciplinary forum in Greenland.
- Promote collaboration on health-related research in Greenland between professional groups and across health districts.

This Year`s theme, Education and Future, brought together healthcare professionals, educators and Researcher to explore how education can drive innovation and improve health outcomes across the Arctic region.
We worked toward a healthier future for the Arctic.

NUNAMED is organized by the Greenland Medical Society, Peqqissaasut Kattuffiat (Greenland Nursing Organization),
Nakorsat Peqatigiiffiat (Greenland Doctor Association), and the Greenland Center for Health Research.


NUNA


kompetencer er nøglen til at sikre kvalit
erhed og udvikling
ddannelse er vejen frem

NUNAMED 2025 – Record Participation and Public Outreach

Nick Duelund & Christine Ingemann, on behalf of the Organizing Committee

The NUNAMED 2025 conference was successfully held in Nuuk from 3–5 October 2025 and attracted more than 460 participants, representing the highest attendance in the conference's history.

Under the theme Education and the Future, the program included 45 parallel sessions and workshops held over three days. Discussions addressed current and emerging issues in health and health research, including ethics in health research, future-oriented educational development in Greenland and the Faroe Islands, and mental health. Keynote presentations connected the conference theme with both regional and international perspectives.

In addition to the scientific program, NUNAMED 2025 featured a public keynote session focusing on Education and Research in Greenland, presented by early-career Greenlandic researchers, as well as a keynote on The Fight Against Cancer. The poster session was also open to the public, serving as a platform to increase awareness of health research and to strengthen dialogue between researchers and the wider community.

The conference was formally opened by the Minister of Health and People with Disabilities in Greenland, Anna Wagenheim, followed by remarks from the Chief Medical Officer of Greenland, Paneeraq Noahsen.

By bringing together education, research, and clinical practice across disciplines and borders, NUNAMED 2025 supported ongoing national and regional efforts to strengthen health research capacity, education, and knowledge exchange in Greenland and the Arctic.

Participants represented a wide range of professional backgrounds, including medical doctors, nurses, public health researchers, nursing and medical students, and policymakers. The conference welcomed participants from 14 countries, reflecting its growing international reach. The majority of the affiliated researchers at Greenland's Center for Health Research contributed to the conference through co-organizing the event, presenting as a keynote speaker, hosting a thematic session or presenting their research.

Greenland Center for Health Research participated in the Organizing Committee alongside Danish/Greenlandic Society for Circumpolar Health, Peqqissaasut Kattuffiat (Greenland's Nursing Organization), and Nakorsat Peqatigiiffiat (Greenland's Doctor Association).

We thank all participants, speakers, and partners for their engagement and contributions. The next NUNAMED conference will be held in Nuuk from 6–9 October 2028. Further information will be made available at nunamed.org as the conference date approaches.

PhD course - One Health in the Arctic

Greenland Center for Health Research at the Institute of Health and Nature (Ilisimatusarfik) held a two-day PhD course focusing on the concept of One Health

As part of the YoungArctic project, financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, a two-day PhD course at Ilisimatusarfik / University of Greenland was funded through the UArctic Norwegian Funding for Networking Activities on Arctic Research and Education. The course was followed by individual three-minute pitch presentations at the Nunamed 2025 health conference in Nuuk, Greenland.

On October 1 and 2, 2025, Greenland Center for Health Research at the Institute of Health and Nature (Ilisimatusarfik) held a two-day PhD course focusing on the concept of One Health and its impact on health research in the Arctic. The course spotlighted how the health of humans, animals, and the environment is closely connected, and how this perspective can contextualize and thus strengthen health research in Arctic areas.

A total of 18 international PhD students from Greenland, Canada, New Zealand, The Faroe Islands, and Denmark participated.

Through lectures and practical exercises, students worked independently and in groups to relate the concept of One Health to their own PhD projects. This was followed by individual, three-minute pitch presentations at two well-attended thematic sessions during the NUNAMED conference. Here, research ideas and results were shared, and participants gained valuable experience in communicating complex research areas in a short and easily understandable way.

Teaching was led by researchers from Greenland Center for Health Research and partners from the UArctic Thematic Network on Health and Well-being in the Arctic.

The PhD course was an activity under the UArctic Thematic Network on Health and Well-being in the Arctic.

The following stories are written by participants in the PhD course

Janat Ibrahimi:

My participation in the PhD One Health course and the NUNAMED Conference in Nuuk, Greenland, provided an invaluable opportunity for academic growth, professional connection, and personal reflection - one that I would not have experienced had I not attended.

The PhD One Health course created a unique space to connect with other graduate students engaged in circumpolar research. The course provided an opportunity for critical dialogue with professors and peers that pushed me to reflect deeply on how I approach my work and the responsibilities I carry as a researcher in northern contexts. It was a rich cultural and knowledge exchange where we challenged ideas, compared methodologies, and learned from one another's approaches. These discussions validated my own ways of doing research, especially as they relate to working collaboratively and respectfully with communities in the North.

This experience was particularly meaningful in relation to my doctoral research, which examines holistic birthing practices across the circumpolar North. It is one thing to study these practices through literature; it is entirely different to be immersed at a conference where researchers, health professionals, and community members are actively sharing distinct experiences of providing care in their own regions. Hearing these experiences firsthand helped me better understand the contexts and values that shape different models of care.

As a member of the Circumpolar Maternal and Child Health Working Group, sub-group of a UArctic thematic network, the conference also offered an invaluable opportunity to meet and network with many of the members I had previously only connected with online. Meeting in person allowed us to strengthen our relationships, exchange ideas more meaningfully, and lay the groundwork for future collaboration.

Beyond the academic setting, I felt deeply honoured and privileged to visit Nuuk. The land and its people were incredibly welcoming. One of my highlights was joining the hike organized by the conference up Quassussuaq Mountain - a humbling and memorable experience that I will always carry with me.

Vár Honnudóttir:

My name is Vár Honnudóttir, and I am a PhD student at the University of the Faroe Islands, where I study social inequality in health in the Faroese population. Although the Faroe Islands are often seen as a homogeneous and equal society, we lack evidence on whether health is socially patterned. My work addresses this gap by analysing large population-based health surveys, as registry-based research is not possible in our setting. I examine potential associations between indicators of social position and health outcomes, and the mechanisms that may underlie these patterns in a small-scale island society.

I travelled to Nuuk to participate in the PhD course One Health in the Arctic and the NUNAMED conference. I wished to join this event because the One Health approach offers a broader perspective of health determinants, emphasizing the connections between people, environment and animals. This framework is relevant for Arctic and island societies, where traditional practices, environmental conditions and cultural structures may interact with social inequality in distinct ways. The course provided new reflections that are directly useful for my PhD project, and several discussions highlighted factors that may influence health in ways not captured by standard socioeconomic measures. During the week, I also met researchers working on related topics, including colleagues involved in health surveys in Greenland, which has already led to further contact.

The UArctic grant made a significant difference for me. Travelling from the Faroe Islands to Greenland is expensive, and the support helped cover essential travel costs and made my participation feasible within my limited PhD budget. Through the course and conference, I gained theoretical perspectives, feedback on my ongoing analyses, and valuable presentation experience by presenting my poster at NUNAMED. The event also broadened my understanding of Arctic health challenges and strengthened my academic network in the region.
Visiting Greenland made a strong personal impression. Despite clear differences, I experienced a sense of familiarity between our small and isolated societies, and this reinforced my motivation to continue working within Arctic health research and to explore comparative perspectives between Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

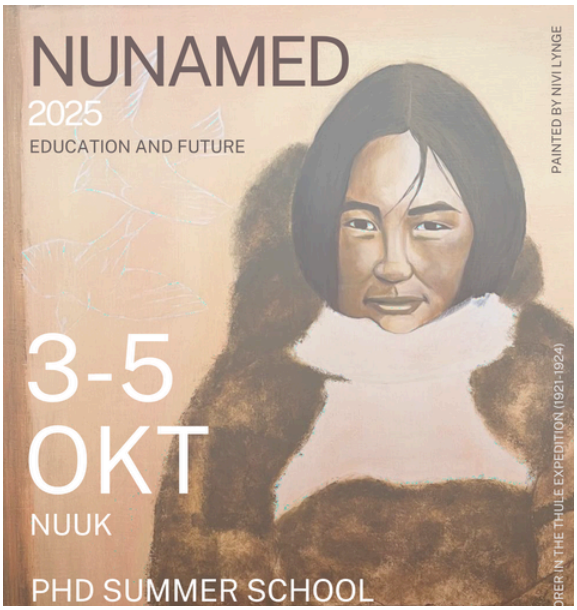
Charlotte Brandstrup Ottendahl:

From October 1st to 2nd, I had the privilege of participating in the One Health in the Arctic PhD course held in Nuuk, Greenland, just ahead of the NUNAMED 2025 conference. The course provided a unique opportunity to explore interdisciplinary approaches to health in Arctic contexts, with a strong emphasis on collaboration across sectors and regions.

One of the highlights of the course was the chance to connect with fellow PhD students from across the Arctic and from other indigenous populations in the world. Hearing about their research and exchanging perspectives on shared challenges in Arctic health was inspiring. The diversity of topics and approaches underscored the importance of regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing in addressing complex health issues.

The integration of the course with the NUNAMED conference was particularly valuable. It allowed us to engage with a broader community of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and to present the outcomes of our course work in designated sessions during the conference. This not only gave visibility to our discussions and findings but also fostered meaningful dialogue with the wider audience.
Overall, the experience was both academically enriching and personally rewarding. I am grateful to have been part of a course and conference that so effectively bridged research, practice, and regional collaboration in Arctic health.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend this course.



UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC

Certificate of Recognition

Presented to

THEMATIC NETWORK ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE ARCTIC

In recognition of 20 years of commitment and activities in Arctic Health cooperation in organizing joint education, research and being active member in Arctic organizations and programs working towards healthier lives of Arctic communities.

Lars Kullerud

President, University of the Arctic

October 14, 2025
Akureyri, Iceland

UArctic

The Thematic Network on Health and Well-being in the Arctic (TNHW)

TNHW is one of the four founding University of the Arctic Thematic Networks (UArctic TNs), established in 2005. In 2025, the network proudly celebrates its 20th anniversary. Originally launched as the Thematic Network on Arctic Medicine, it was briefly led by Professor Juhani Hassi from the University of Oulu, Finland, with just a few partners — including the University of Greenland. Later that same year, leadership passed to Professor Arja Rautio, also from the University of Oulu. Since 2017, Dr. Gert Mulvad from the University of Greenland has taken the lead, supported by a growing leadership team. Vice leads have included Anastasia Emelyanova (joined in 2017), Sandra Juutilainen (2017–2018), Anna Reetta Rönkä (joined in 2018), and Christine Ingemann (joined in 2022).

Today, TNHW has grown into a vibrant network of around 40 members, representing 24 partner institutions. Its newsletter reaching 87 subscribers (number actual by Sept. 2025) is sent out regularly to share updates on events, conferences, and activities related to UArctic and the Thematic Network.

Current Research Projects
TNHW members are actively involved in several new transdisciplinary research initiatives funded under the EU Horizon Zero Pollution call. Two major projects ArcSolution and ILLUQ began in 2024 and are grounded in One Health and participatory frameworks. A third sister project, ICEBERG, was also funded through the same call.

ArcSolution focuses on reducing pollution in the Arctic through a comprehensive approach that integrates environmental and human health perspectives.

ILLUQ offers the first holistic investigation into the interconnected effects of permafrost thaw, pollution, and well-being in Arctic communities and ecosystems.

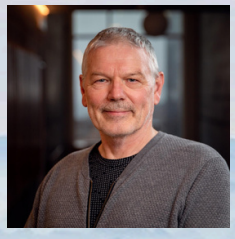
In addition, TNHW members are contributing to the Lancet Commission of Arctic Health, a landmark initiative composed primarily of Arctic Indigenous representatives working alongside colleagues from across the region. The Commission aims to identify key health and wellness challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in the Arctic and to develop a roadmap for improving health outcomes through culturally grounded and community-driven approaches.

Thematic Network on Health and Wellbeing in the Arctic Celebrating 20th anniversary

It is one of the four oldest UArctic thematic networks (TNs), created in 2005. It initially started as the Thematic Network on Arctic Medicine. The first lead was Prof. Juhani Hassi from University of Oulu. The early goal of TNs was capacity building by offering multidisciplinary education to rural Arctic areas through online courses.

Now, the TN on Health and Wellbeing in the Arctic bases its activities on the contemporary needs and priorities of the Arctic communities. It aims to promote a multidisciplinary approach to improve social circumstances for the populations, both with regard to health and well-being, as well as delivery of health care and social services.

Former LEAD (2006-2017), Prof. Arja Rautio, University of Oulu



Current LEAD Dr. Gert Mulvad, University of Greenland

The main task is to increase the quantity and quality of scientific research and education carried out in the Arctic on the themes of health and well-being:

- by organizing Master's and PhD education and training
- by conducting collaborative and co-created research projects
- by disseminating knowledge on Arctic health to various stakeholders, including local communities

Research and education focuses on topics, such as mental wellness, research ethics, Indigenous health, community-based participatory research, maternity health, healthy aging, health impacts of pollution and permafrost, demographic change, infectious diseases in humans and wildlife, food and water security, One Health, climate change, and gender issues, and more.

Selected past and ongoing activities

- Over 100 courses and summer and winter schools for MA and PhD students held since 2006 with collaborators
- Master´s degree program 2008-2024
- PhD studies and student exchange program (funding 2012-2015)
- Strengthening Arctic health networks through partnerships and mentorship program (2023-2027)
- Several recent research projects: e.g., CLINF-GREEN; EDCMET, PARC, Sami Reindeer herders' health, Nunataryuk, ILLUQ, ArcSolution, Healthy aging
- Participation in the Lancet Commission on Arctic and Northern Health (publication submitted), AMAP & SDWG Human Health groups, ICC Health group

PhD course, Kirkenes 2014

TN meeting, St. Petersburg 2017

PhD Summer school, Nuuk 2018

Master´s program students and teachers, Oulu 2010

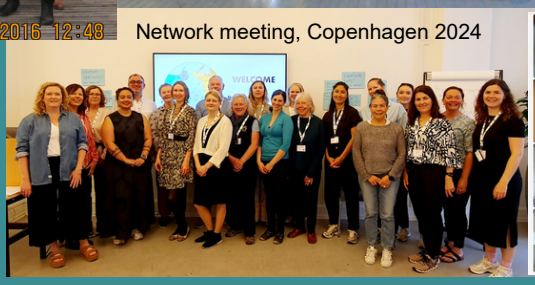
QR code to TN website:

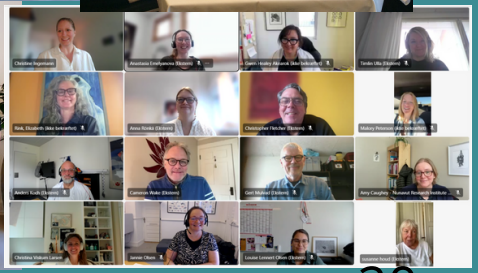
TN meeting, Oulu 2015

PhD Summer school, Nuuk 2016

PhD Summer school, Kirkenes 2018

Network meeting, Copenhagen 2024





TN engagement meeting, 2024

UArctic Thematic Network
Health and Well-being in the Arctic

The Networkis one of the oldest, created in 2005, and bases its research and higher education activities on the **contemporary needs and priorities of the circumpolar regions** and aims to promote a **transdisciplinary approach** to improvesocial circumstances for population health as well as delivery of health care and social services in the Arctic.

Partnerinstitutions

Aarhus University	University of Alaska Anchorage
Finnish Meteorological Institute	University of Alaska Fairbanks
University of Greenland	University of Alberta
Luleå University of Technology	University of Copenhagen
Stefansson Arctic Institute	University of Lapland
The Arctic University of Norway	University of Oulu
Umeå University	University of Southern Maine
University of Akureyri	JOIN US!

Main Activities

•Promoting research projects and education on Arctic health via joint international research projects and PhD courses in Arctic health (graduate level)

•Writing joint publications and research funding applications

•Advocating the Arctic health research needs via participating in various high level Working groups

Current and Planned Activities for 2023

Arctic Pandemics: COVID-19 and Other Pandemic Experiences and Lessons Learnt Special Issue of Arctic Yearbook, 2022-2023 •CLINF-GREEN project funded by Nordforsk, 2022-2023 •Developing the MA course "One Health in Northern Communities and Ecosystems" funded by UArctic, 2021-2024 •Participation in the Lancet Commission on Arctic Health: Accelerating Indigenous Health and Well-being, starting February 10-13, 2020, Dartmouth College, USA, ongoing •AMAP Human Health group has online meetings for preparing the next assessment in 2021, ongoing •Research visits and exchanges, ongoing •A workshop with the Circumpolar Maternal and Child Health working group •Collaboration with other UArctic Thematic Networks such as Working in the Arctic network, Ageing and Gender in the Arctic •Face-to-cafe meetings adjoint to the Arctic-wide conferences (UArcticCongress,ASSW, ICCH, Nunamed, Arctic Circle, Arctic Frontiers, and others)

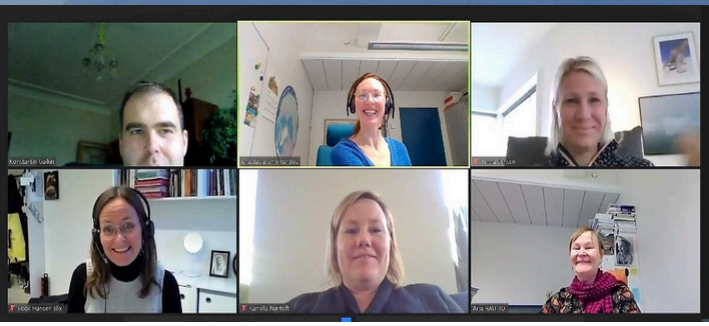
LEAD Dr. Gert Mulvad, University of Greenland

VICE-LEAD Dr. Anastasia Emelyanova, University of Oulu

VICE-LEAD Dr. Anna Rönkä,University of Oulu

VICE-LEAD Christine Ingemann, University of Greenland & University of Southern Denmark

Former LEAD (2005-2017), our member, advisor and friend Prof. Arja Rautio, University of Oulu



NORRUS-AGE project (completed 06.2022)

CLINF-GREEN project (ongoing)

PhD Course 2022

https://www.uarctic.org/activities/thematic-networks/health-and-well-being-in-the-arctic/

COMING ACTIVITIES

Kongressens hjemmeside: www.uarcticcongress.fo

NEWS FROM RESEARCHERS AND RESEARCH GROUPS

Lene Seibæk, RN, MHH, PhD. Professor at the Institute of Health and Nature – activities 2025

The year 2025 has indeed brought significant events. Of these I would like to highlight:

- The establishment and startup of the Grief Counselor training-program, developed and adapted to Greenlandic conditions in a partnership between Institute of Health & Nature at Ilisimatusarfik and the National Grief Center.

- The establishment and startup of a professional candidate-education in advanced clinical nursing (APN) in close collaboration with the Greenlandic Healthcare System and University of Southern Denmark in Denmark.

- A visit at Fróðskaparsetur Føroya/ the University of Faroe Islands and the Faroe Islands Health Services with representatives from The Nursing Education Program at Ilisimatusarfik (Head of Institute Anna Kleist Egede, Head of Department Louise Lennert Olsen and myself) and the Healthcare System (deputy director Aka Olsen). The visit had mutual focus on nursing, healthcare- and PhD education, and touched upon their preliminary experiences of establishing a university hospital. Further, the visit has given rise to a promising, increased collaboration at PhD school level.

- The Nunamed conference, which – once again – exceeded our wildest expectations. During the conference Greenland Center of Health Research along with their partners played a crucial role in terms of planning, delivery, and high-quality presentations.

We also had to say goodbye to dear colleagues: former head of Institute Anna Kleist Egede, and former head of Department Louise Lennert Olsen who are now affiliated to Queen Ingrid's Hospital in Nuuk, and associate professor Carsten Juul-Jensen who will continue as adjunct associated professor at Health and Nature.

Of these positions, Lone Nukaraaq Møller has been appointed Head of Institute 16.2.2026. We look very much forward to welcoming her, and hopefully also new colleagues in the remaining vacant positions during early 2026.

On this background, my professional focus during 2025 has been on sustaining continuity and creating new research collaborations at the Institute as such, as well as in relation to PhD education. Meanwhile, my ongoing research has been centered around user involvement in healthcare, basic nursing care, and professional development/education in healthcare.

STUDIES

Ongoing:

· Patient education in Greenland: Development and feasibility testing interventions for patients with diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Project group; Maja Hykkelbjerg Nielsen, Annesofie Lunde Jensen, Michael Lynge Pedersen, Lene Seibæk (main supervisor).

· Retention of nurses in education and working life. Project group; Carsten Juul Jensen, Anna Kleist Egede, Louise Lennert Olsen, Lene Seibæk (project responsible).

· Mental well-being during nursing education. Project group: Carsten Juul-Jensen, Anna Kleist Egede, Lene Seibæk (project responsible).

Completed:

· Paradoxes of Care. Managing paediatric atopic dermatitis in postcolonial Greenland. Master project by Mathilde Torp Schou (co-supervisor).

Preben Homøe, adjunct Professor at Ilisimatusarfik and full Professor at SUND, University of Copenhagen

Within otorhinolaryngology (ORL) new research results will be expected in 2026. The sleep apnea project is under data scrutinization by ph.d.-student Mads Mose Jensen. Preliminary results were given at NUNA MED 2025 where the ORL-session was a great success. Talks on tonsillotomy, audiology and sleep apnea were given. In addition, ORL has published chapters in the new medical textbook "Medicine in Greenland" concerning special diseases such as head and neck cancer, peritonsillar absces, otitis media and hearing disorders. The chapters have been written by Nicolai Hardenberg Larsen, Ramon G. Jensen and Preben Homøe. Also, an instructional video dealing with knowledge of middle ear infection in children and how to do ear irrigation has been released.
In autumn 2025 the course in Greenlandic Medicine was launched. It is a course for students in medicine at University of Copenhagen under the Institute of Medicine. It is a practical course established in cooperation with Greenland Health Service, the Greenland Patient Home in Copenhagen, Steno-diabetes Center in Nuuk. It is the hope this course will engage students who aim for a medical career in Greenland and will encourage to do medical or health care research during their professional life.
Finally, I have given an interview on a lifelong interest in ORL diseases and health studies in Greenland published in the Journal of the Swedish Society of ORL - Head and Neck Surgery volume 33, 4/2025
(see https://online.fliphtml5.com/tkwd/bycl/).

Ruth Montgomery-Andersen, DrPH

- ARTS INTERVENTIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH OF GREENLANDIC YOUTHS (AIM-GREENLAND) AIM-Greenland is a project that aims to use art and creative expression to have a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Greenland. The pilot project, 'Inuusa', is taking place in Aasiaat in November 2025 - January 2026. Collaboratry research intervention with New York University's Jameel Arts & Health Lab, Syddansk Universitet, WHO, Naalakkersuisut, and Ilisimatusarfik.

- Circumpolar Maternal Child Health Gathering that hosted by ICHR institute. March 3 and 4, 2026 in Yellowknife. A co-design of community-based maternal and childhealth services in the Arctic: Learning through circumpolar collaborations and Indigenous knowledgesharing.

Workshop at Nunamed: Delineating Professional Identity Using Creative Methods in the Arctic

Bibi Hølge-Hazelton, PhD, RN, Professor

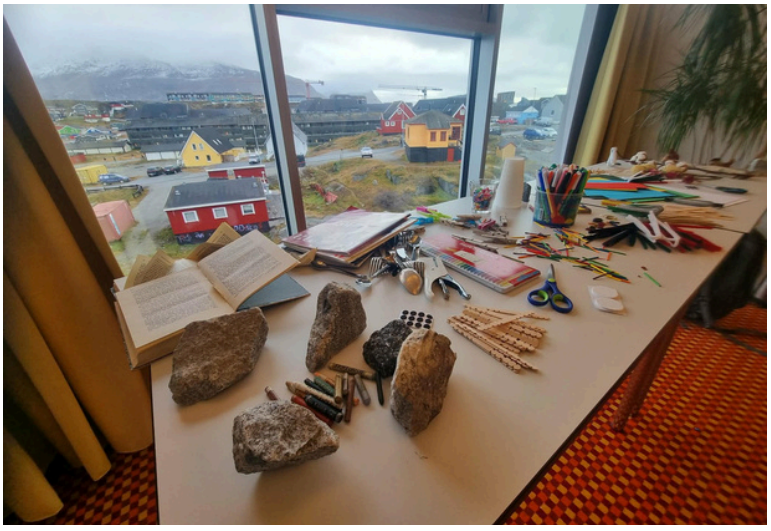
Presenters: Professor Bibi Hølge-Hazelton, head of nursing education Louise Lennert Olesen, Head of institute Anna Kleist Egede, and associate professor Carsten Juul Jensen

a) Background
This workshop explores the delineation of professional identity in a artic context through creative methods. The aim is to foster a deeper understanding of professional identity and its development through artistic and cultural activities. Creative methods, such as visual art, poetry, music, and movement, have proven to be effective tools for exploring and developing professional identity. These methods contribute to a holistic learning experience that integrates both emotional and cognitive aspects of learning.

b) Method
The workshop is designed to integrate theoretical and practical elements that support learning and reflection. Participants use natural materials to create visual representations of their professional identity, write poems to express their feelings and thoughts, and engage in communal singing activities to strengthen cultural connection and community. Theoretically, the workshop is grounded in social constructivist and dialogical approaches that promote co-creation and collaborative learning. Participants will also contribute to examining the applicability of these methods in a Greenlandic context, encompassing both Danish and Greenlandic professionals.

c) Results
The workshop will focus on participants' experiences and learning outcomes, with particular emphasis on their reflections on professional identity and the creative methods used. Participants' feedback and reflections will be collected and analyzed to assess the effectiveness and relevance of the methods in the Greenlandic context. The results are expected to provide insights into how creative methods can support the development of professional identity in a culturally diverse group.

d) Conclusion
This workshop offers a unique opportunity to explore professional identity through creative and cultural methods, which can lead to enhanced self-understanding and professional development. By integrating theoretical frameworks with practical exercises, the workshop promotes a holistic learning experience. Participants' contributions will be crucial in developing and adapting these methods to a Greenlandic context, which may have broader applications in other culturally diverse environments.



Research in Clinical Urology in Greenland

Jørgen Bjerggaard Jensen, Consultant at Department of Surgery, Queen Ingrid's Hospital, Nuuk & Greenland Centre for Health Research, Institute for Health and Nature, Ilisimatusarfik

Research in clinical urology in Greenland has since 2023 been focusing on the GreenBladder study where a new urinary marker has been investigated to facilitate a quicker and less logistically challenging method to do initial work-up in patients with haematuria. Facing the large distances and sparse urological service so far in Greenland, the initial triage by this urinary marker test has proven to be a safe and reliable method to select the right patients for further investigation with cystoscopy whereas the vast majority of patients can avoid this time consuming method with limited availability. The marker is currently under clinical implementation within the urology service in Greenland based on this study. The results from the GreenBladder study were presented at the International Congress on Circumpolar Health (ICCH) in Halifax, Canada in 2024 and at Nunamed 2025 in Nuuk and have been published recently (January 2026). Based on this pioneering study and as a consequence on a higher focus and more resources for urological service in the upcoming years, a formal affiliation agreement within research in clinical urology was made in 2025. Here, the undersigned, Department of Surgery DIH and Ilisimatusarfik aim to initiate further clinical research projects that focus on capacity building based on an evidence-based approach and continuous evaluation, including the patient perspective. Specifically, it is planned to strengthen the urological capacity via coastal trips and focus on telemedicine solutions, where we will evaluate these solutions with regards to treatment quality, capacity, patient experience and resources.

News from Institute of Health and Nature, the Nursing Education

Project: Well-being, Education, and Retention

Team Members: Carsten Juul Jensen, Anna Kleist Egede, Louise Lennert Olsen, and Lene Seibæk from the Nursing Education Program, Institute of Health and Nature, as well as Queen Ingrid's Hospital.

The team has continued to highlight nursing, nurses, and nursing students within the healthcare system and educational agenda as part of the organizing committee for NUNAMED 2025. Data from the project have been analyzed and disseminated in a popular scientific format, and will be published as a scientific article in 2026. The publications describe nursing practices that function in Greenland for patients within strong community settings. This enables creative solutions at regional hospitals and health centers. This approach illustrates a sustainable healthcare system, as working with the core values of nursing provides nurses with job satisfaction, supports retention, and fosters a sense of responsibility for both the healthcare system and Greenlandic society.

Greenlandic Textbook for Nurses and Nursing Students

Editors: Anna Kleist Egede, Lise Hounsgaard, Tine Aagaard, and Carsten Juul Jensen.

"Greenlandic Perspectives on Nursing Practice" is an upcoming professional textbook (spring 2026) addressing key themes in nursing education and the nursing profession within Greenlandic society. The book is grounded in a local, cultural and linguistic context.

Collaboration on a bachelor's thesis at the Institute of Health and Nature, Nursing Education, Ilisimatusarfik, and Steno Diabetes Center Greenland

Participants: Karoline Hammeken, Carsten Juul Jensen, Mads Mose Jensen

Karoline Hammeken (Bachelor student, 2024) conducted six qualitative interviews for Steno Diabetes Center Greenland focusing on user experiences with sleep apnea and experiences related to the initiation of CPAP treatment. Two of the interviews were analysed in a bachelor's thesis and further developed into an article accepted for publication in Klinisk Sygepleje.

CAHME (Center for Arctic Health & Molecular Epidemiology)

Eva Bonefeld-Jørgensen, Professor

Teaching

Arctic Medicine optional course for medical students at Aarhus University. The CAHME Centre, Aarhus University will again in 2026 run the course "Arctic Medicine optional course for medical students" being offered for more than 14 year – always filled up with the given limited number of 30 students. The course includes arctic experienced teachers from Greenland, Copenhagen, Aalborg and Aarhus.
CAHME coordinates self-organized clinical stays for medical students at Aarhus University outside Denmark. Primarily in Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Northern Norway.

Research projects

CAHME (Center for Arctic Health & Molecular Epidemiology) has received an additional project grant from DANCEA which will run over 2025- 2028. The project is a continuation of the ACCEPT cohort establishment (2010-2015) with the plans to follow-up every 5 years. The first follow-up I (2019-2020) was conducted when the children were 3-5 years of age. The current project ACCEPT follow-up II includes the mother and child now 9-13 years of age. The project teams are from CAHME Maria Wielsøe, Eva Cecilie Bonefeld-Jørgensen, Manhai Long and from Queen Ingrid's Health Center (DIS), at Queen Ingrid's Hospital, (DIH) in Nuuk Heidi Noahsen. The current project ACCEPT follow-up II has two aims: AIM 1: Assess the Greenlandic time trend of PFAS, 1998-2025" including monitoring and analyze PFAS concentrations, profiles and temporal trends in whole blood (1998-2026) comparing them with serum levels. It involves existing biobank of whole blood samples and existing PFAS serum data, in addition to sampling of new ACCEPT child dried whole blood spots samples. AIM2: The ACCEPT cohort follow-up II includes the mothers and children between 9-13 years of age. The activities include questionnaires about diet, lifestyle and health and development of the child, as well as biomonitoring by sampling of biological samples for measuring environmental pollutants.
Contaminants in Arctic wildlife and humans in the Arctic - cross-cutting issues; follow up on the Workshop 23-25 May 2023, Sandbjerg, Denmark. At the workshop the AMAP expert group working on contaminants and their associated effects in wildlife and in humans decided to establish four cross-cutting writing groups: 1. PFAS-cases (published, Lohman et al. 2024); 2. Zoonosis (published, Andersen-Ranberg et al 2024); 3. Exposures and Health effect (CAHME being coordinator, expected to submit manuscript in spring 2026); 4. CEACs (Human exposure to chemicals of emerging Arctic concern). The CAHME (Center for Arctic Health & Molecular Epidemiology) Centre is involved in three writing groups: 1., 3. and group 4.
CAHME are participating in the EU project "Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals" (PARC) in which we are working on various statistical data evaluation for further exposure - effect analyses as EU comparisons. Both Greenlandic and Danish epidemiological data already published are included.

Yearly Report 2025 from Center for Arctic Health & Molecular Epidemiology (CAHME)

NUNAMED conference

We participated in the Nunamed conference in Nuuk 03.-05. October 2025. As at earlier Nunamed conferences we were responsible for the Environmental and Occupational session. There were five presenters. The presented data were from Faroe Islands and Greenland.
Presenters from CAHME were 1) Eva Cecilie Bonefeld-Jørgensen, Title: Crosscutting Wildlife-Humans in the Arctic: Environmental exposures and biological effects; 2) Manhai Long, Phthalates in Greenlandic adults: Urinary concentrations and exposure determinants; 3) Maria Wielsøe, The Greenlandic ACCEPT cohort – relations between exposure to environmental contaminants and children's development and health.

Research activities: During year 2025 we have further worked on our Greenlandic research projects. The Greenlandic birth cohort ACCEPT, established during 2010-2015, aims to follow up each fifth year on the mother, (the father) and child including: diet, lifestyle and health, and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP) biomonitoring. These planned long-term data can contribute to a valuable source for elucidating and understanding the role of exposure levels and sources, lifestyle factors and trends over time on the health of women and their children in Greenland.
During 2025 we have finalized and contributed to the publication of following research data:

Phthalates and phthalate alternative in Greenlandic adults: Urinary concentrations and exposure determinants (Long et al. 2025) (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijheh.2025.114695).
Phthalates are a series of widely used chemicals in a large range of products and have endocrine disruption potentials being detrimental to human health. To our knowledge, there are no reports on phthalate exposure in the general population in Greenland. This study evaluates the phthalate exposure profiles and the influence of characteristics of 602 adults across Greenland recruited during 2000–2019.
Metabolites of phthalates and DINCH were detected in more than 25 % of the spot urine samples. For certain phthalate metabolites, less than 3 % exceeded the human biomonitoring guidance values (HBM-GV). Females had higher concentrations of phthalate metabolites than males. Participants from east and west regions had higher concentrations of some phthalate metabolites than those from north, Disko Bay and south regions. Age positively associated with metabolites concentrations of di-(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) and diethyl phthalate (DEP). DEHP metabolites concentrations increased with BMI and biomarker of marine food intake. Pregnancy and parity may influence the concentrations of phthalate metabolites. The phthalate exposure was age- and sex-dependent likely due to differences in lifestyle habits. Urinary concentrations of DINCH metabolites were higher in Greenlandic adults compared to other populations.

Persistent organic pollutants among seafood processing workers in West Greenland (Wielsøe et al. 2025) (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijheh.2024.114484).

The Greenlandic population is highly exposed to persistent organic pollutants (POPs) through the consumption of traditional marine food, including marine mammals. Central to Greenland's economy and cultural identity, the fishing industry employes about 15% of the working population. This study investigated POP exposure, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), organochlorine pesticides (OCPs), and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs), among seafood processing workers at the Greenlandic west coast. We examined determinants for the POPs including age, smoking habits, ethnicity, and working place. Additionally, we explored the association between POPs and the prevalence of asthma, allergy, and lung function. With samples taken during 2016–2018, the study encompassed 382 workers, primarily of Inuit descent (93%), employed across three large factories located in Nuuk, Sisimiut, and Ilulissat, four smaller factories in settlements (Kangaatsiaq, Ikerasaarsuk, Sarfannguaq, Qeqertarsuaq), and four factory trawlers. Data collected include clinical examinations, questionnaires on ethnicity, occupational exposure status, health indicators, and smoking habits, and serum selenium and POP analyses. Significant differences in POPs were observed among ethnic groups; Faroese workers had the highest concentrations of lipophilic POPs (lipPOPs; PCBs and OCPs), while Inuit workers exhibited highest PFASs. All subsequent analyses were focused on the Inuit workers (n = 337). The PFASs were significantly higher in workers at small factories, followed by large factories and trawlers, whereas no differences were seen for lipPOPs. The differences between the working places were most likely due to differences in lifestyle and diet, but occupational exposures cannot be excluded. LipPOP and PFAS concentrations are associated positively with selenium, and PFASs positively associated with lung function. However, upon adjustment of selenium, the associations between PFASs and lung function became non-significant and attenuated towards null. No significant associations were found between POPs and the prevalence of asthma or allergy. Compared to the general population in the same area and period, the seafood processing workers exhibited 2–6 times higher POP levels. The higher exposure level among seafood processing workers, as well as the difference across workplaces, underscore the need for further investigation of environmental and occupational sources of POPs in this population. These findings may contribute to future public health strategies and regulatory measures to reduce POP exposure in Arctic populations.

Ubiquitous global use of persistent PFAS threatens Arctic Indigenous peoples for decades to come (Sonne et al. 2025)
(https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crsus.2025.100341)

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are found in the environment worldwide due to their ubiquitous usage, global transport, and biological persistence. Here, we estimate the temporal dietary exposure to long-range-transported PFAS during 2006–2020 in the East Greenland Ittoqqortoormiit (Scoresby Sound) community based on consumption of traditional marine foods as compared with internationally established tolerable weekly intake (TWI) for immune toxicity of 4.4 ng/kg body weight. We found a biomagnification factor of 4–10 between ringed seal:polar bear and estimate that ¸90% of the Ittoqqortoormiit community exceeded the established P4PFAS TWI by 13-fold through consumption of polar bears and ringed seals. We estimate that the average inhabitant will continue to exceed established toxicity guidelines until 2090, posing the risk of immune suppression and disease susceptibility. Our findings emphasize the need for additional regulation of PFAS and the development of non-toxic sustainable compounds through international collaboration, not least through the Stockholm Convention.
Asthma in Greenland - development and evaluation of the asthma symptom score (Hempel Christiansen et al. 2025)
(https://doi.org/10.1080/22423982.2025.2540684)
The study describes the development of the Asthma Symptom Score (ASS) and evaluates its accuracy and internal consistency in Greenlandic and Danish, using clinical interviews based on Global Initiative for Asthma guidelines as the gold standard. A cross-sectional study was conducted across all regions of Greenland, targeting citizens aged 12+, using data from the electronic medical record. The ASS (n = 94) was validated against clinical interviews using a receiver operating characteristic curve, yielding an area under the curve estimate of 0.91, indicating strong agreement. The ASS demonstrated a sensitivity of 83%, a specificity of 93%, and an overall agreement of 87%. Patients scoring 0–5 points were categorized as having controlled asthma, while those scoring 6–20 points were categorized as non-controlled. Among participants completing both the ASS and the clinical interview, 57% were classified as having non-controlled asthma. The ASS demonstrated acceptable internal consistency in both Greenlandic and Danish. These findings underscore the need for improved management of asthma in Greenland. The strong correlation between the ASS and clinical interviews suggests that the ASS may be a valuable tool in clinical practice for assessing asthma control among patients with a confirmed diagnosis. However, further validation including a larger study group, and test – retest reliability is recommended.

Seroprevalence of seven climate-sensitive zoonoses in Greenland and northern Sweden (1998–2017): High antibody prevalence against Rickettsia and Leptospira, with Leptospira possibly linked to global warming. (Koch et al. 2025) (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.onehlt.2025.101244).

Climate change may alter zoonotic disease patterns in the Arctic, yet knowledge remains limited. Design: Antibodies to seven zoonotic pathogens were analyzed in 660 unselected human sera drawn from serum banks from Greenland (n = 460) and Northern Sweden (n = 200) (1998–2017), frequency-matched with respect to sex, age, ethnicity and place of living. Greenlandic samples were tested for Francisella tularensis, Brucella melitensis, Brucella abortus, Coxiella burnetii, Rickettsia spp., and Leptospira spp., while Swedish samples also included Borrelia burgdorferi sensu lato (Bbsl) and tick-borne encephalitis virus (TBEV).
Conclusions: This first report on human Leptospira infection in Greenland highlights rising seroprevalence, possibly linked to contaminated water and global warming. Findings emphasize widespread Rickettsia exposure in northern regions and tick-borne pathogens in Sweden, underscoring the need for updated public health data to inform public health planning.

Epidemiological relevant effect biomarkers for thyroid hormone system related adverse outcome pathways: a literature review (Wielsøe et al. 2026). Accepted for publication in Frontiers of Pharmacology.

Many factors, such as lifestyle, medication, and environmental exposures, are reported to cause thyroid hormone system disruption (THSD) in humans, however studies linking THSD to health effects are sparse. Adverse Outcome Pathways (AOPs) provide mechanistic links from molecular events to adverse outcomes, with effect biomarkers serving as a tool to empirically anchor key events and health effects and to assess biological relevance. This review aims to identify and evaluate effect biomarkers for thyroid hormone system-related AOPs for further validation in experimental and epidemiological studies.
Conclusion: This review operationalizes the AOP framework to support the use of mechanistically anchored effect biomarkers in human studies on THSD. By aligning key biological events with measurable endpoints, human matrices, and feasibility considerations, it provides a scientifically grounded path from mechanistic understanding to population research application. This enables more targeted biomonitoring, strengthens interpretation of epidemiological findings, and informs research and regulatory priorities for future validation efforts.




Updates from the Centre for Public Health in Greenland

Five researchers from the Centre for Public Health in Greenland (Innuttaasut Peqqissusiannik Ilisimatusarfik) at the University of Southern Denmark are affiliated with the Greenland Center for Health Research:

- Professor Christina VL Larsen
- Research Coordinator Ingelise Olesen
- Senior Researcher Tenna Jensen
- Postdoc Christine Ingemann
- PhD student Arnârak P. Bloch

Population Survey
One of the core research projects conducted by the Center is the nationwide population surveys among adult Greenlanders. The survey is carried out by mandate from the Government of Greenland (Naalakkersuisut) with the aim of ensuring robust monitoring of public health. Much of the collected data is used in collaboration with projects lead by many of the researchers affiliated with the Greenland Center for Health Research at Ilisimatusarfik.

At the end of 2024, data collection for the most recent population survey was initiated. The data collection is expected to be completed in 2026. The survey is carried out in one municipality at a time. The first municipality was Qeqqata Kommunia, where data collection ended in the summer of 2025, after which data collection began in the Municipality of Kujalleq. In Qeqqata Kommunia, 245 people were interviewed across all settlements, corresponding to a participation rate of 39%. The results from Qeqqata Kommunia have now been summarized in a municipal report with accompanying infographics. Both have been sent to the municipality along with an invitation for presentations and follow-up meetings about the results. The municipal report will not be publicly available, but the data will be included in a consolidated national report once data collection is complete.

Other research activities
Other core activities at the Center include policy-support assignments, where we carry out scientific tasks for the Ministry of Health and for Paarisa under the Ministry of Children, Youth and Families. Together with Paarisa, we collaborate closely on implementing the Inuuneritta III and Qamani strategies. Below is a list of selected projects led by the researchers mentioned above, illustrating the breadth of activities we engage in:

- **Publications in 2025:**
  - Independent Investigation of Contraception Practices in Greenland, 1960–1991
  - Peqqissuserput: A theoretical research model starting from a place of strengths to support Kalaallit Inuit communities to thrive.

- **Projects with activities in 2025:**
  - Qualitative Study on Coping Resources Among Individuals Who Have Survived Suicidal Thoughts or Suicide Attempts and Who Are Thriving Today.
  - Naapinneq: Strengthening Inuit Maternal and Child Health Through Gathering Inuit from Kalaallit Nunaat and Nunavut.
  - Strengthening Arctic health networks through partnerships and mentorship program.
  - Culture, knowledge, and skills across generations and borders.

Teaching activities at Ilisimatusarfik
With regard to teaching, Christina, Ingelise and Arnârak are an integral part of the development and delivery of the Grief Counsellor Education Program at the Institute of Health and Nature. The program is designed and led in collaboration with the Danish National Center for Grief. In addition, Arnârak and Christine also teach in the nursing program.

Annual report – Steno Diabetes Center Greenland

The new Steno Diabetes Center

In 2025, Steno Diabetes Center maintained a high and diverse level of activity, making strong contributions to national and international health research. The Center's research continues to be characterized by a strong focus on metabolic and cardiovascular diseases, as well as on the interaction between genetic, social, and lifestyle-related factors.

In September 2025, we moved into the new Steno building at Qatserisut. This has provided a unique opportunity to bring research and clinical activities together, and to a certain extent Steno Diabetes Center is able to accommodate researchers from other health disciplines, including dermatology and oncology, as well as visiting researchers. The building includes a research laboratory (not yet completed), and there are limited facilities for storing biological samples at –80°C or –20°C.

In 2025, Steno Diabetes Center had five PhD students, one senior researcher, two professors, as well as a corresponding number of other researchers, research students, and visiting researchers. Descriptions of the individual PhD projects affiliated with Steno Diabetes Center are presented elsewhere in the annual report.

In close collaboration with the clinical sector, research is conducted on patient education within the disease areas of diabetes, COPD, and hypertension. Several studies have examined disease prevalence and risk factors in Greenland and have, among other findings, documented a high prevalence of monogenic diabetes (MODY). A large genetic study has also mapped the distinctive genetic disease architecture in Greenland and contributes new knowledge of importance for precision medicine and future disease prevention. In addition, the Center has contributed to clinically relevant studies on vision screening among Greenlandic schoolchildren and to the development of normative reference values for cardiovascular autonomic neuropathy.

The Center works continuously to strengthen research infrastructure in Greenland in order to provide health researchers with equal access to data. During 2025, it was possible to repatriate data from the Greenland population studies to Statistics Greenland, and Steno has implemented the REDCap data platform for use by all researchers within the healthcare system. Steno Diabetes Center is also supported by a user panel that is actively involved in the Center's research activities.

Kaffemik and presentations of health research to citizens in Ilullissat

Non-invasive measurement of nerve conduction velocity in Pernille Thomsen's candidate-PhD project about diabetic neuropathy

Marit Eika Jørgensen keynote speaker at the Greenland Science Week conference

Monitoring and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases in Greenland

By Lisa Ivalu Lind and Nils Skovgaard, Nunatsinni Nakorsaaneqarfik, National Board of Health

The National Board of Health monitors the transmission and healthcare-related impact of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in Greenland, including HIV, syphilis, hepatitis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea. These diseases display distinct epidemiological patterns with respect to incidence, transmission dynamics, and treatment compliance, varying across geographic regions and demographic groups.
Recent developments in Greenland, including the COVID-19 pandemic, increased international accessibility and changes in health policy, have complicated the development of a representative surveillance system capable of providing a solid basis for high-quality prevention strategies. National surveillance data indicate an increase in reported STD cases, including syphilis, which until recently were eradicated, in Greenland. Part of this increase has shown to be linked to diagnostic misclassification, limiting the ability to distinguish actual epidemiological trends from surveillance artefacts in long-term analyses. These challenges underline the importance of standardized diagnostic procedures and the implementation of a comprehensive, digitalized STD surveillance system.
In Greenland, the most clinically significant STDs (HIV, syphilis, and hepatitis) are subject to mandatory reporting to the National Board of Health, while other STDs (chlamydia and gonorrhea) are monitored based on available clinical data. The current notification process has remained largely unchanged since introduction of the national electronic medical record system, Cosmic, in 2014. Reporting relies on a limited number of clinical staff nationwide who manually identify cases based on clinical assessment, supported by rapid diagnostic assays or confirmatory laboratory tests performed in Denmark.
In 2026, the National Board of Health will propose a new action plan to the Department of Health and People with Disabilities, outlining updated intervention strategies aimed at reducing STD incidence in Greenland. The proposed strategies will outline approaches for implementation by health promotion and prevention units and medical clinics across Greenland, enabling continuous assessment of interventions using spatially resolved surveillance data.
In collaboration with clinical coordinators, the initiative aims to establish a more standardized and accessible reporting model supported by real-time clinical data. Increased automation will support diagnostics, improve reporting timeliness and consistency, and enhance data quality. These improvements will strengthen the capacity of authorities, policymakers, and researchers to monitor, evaluate, and disseminate the effects of implemented prevention strategies. Findings from the implementation process and subsequent trends in STD incidence will be published in collaboration with the Greenland Center for Health Care Research.

New Signs of Infectious Diseases in a Warmer Greenland

Anders Koch, Adjunct Professor, Ilisimatusarfik

Climate change can alter the distribution of zoonoses—diseases transmitted from animals to humans—even in the Arctic. Nevertheless, we still know relatively little about the role of climate change in relation to infectious diseases in the Arctic. This study now provides new insight.
In a study published in 2025, researchers analyzed blood samples from a total of 660 individuals in Greenland and northern Sweden, collected over nearly 20 years. The blood samples were examined for antibodies—that is, signs of previous infection—against a range of diseases typically associated with animals, the environment, and nature.

The most striking finding is that leptospirosis infection has been detected in humans in Greenland for the first time. In western Greenland, the proportion of individuals with antibodies against Leptospira bacteria increased markedly—from approximately 2–3% in 1998 to as high as 30% in 2013. This is far higher than in northern Sweden, where the level was around 4% in 2012–2017.

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that is often transmitted through contaminated freshwater, typically via urine from infected animals, most commonly rodents. The sharp increase suggests that environmental changes—including a warmer climate, increased meltwater, and altered water conditions—may play a role.

The fact that the disease was also detected in polar bears in eastern Greenland supports the conclusion that the bacterium is circulating in the Arctic environment.
Among other diseases, evidence of rickettsial infections was also widespread and stable over time, with around 12% of those examined in Greenland having antibodies against rickettsial bacteria. These bacteria are often transmitted by lice, fleas, and possibly mosquitoes, and typically cause fever, rash, and headache.

Antibodies against the infectious diseases tularemia and brucellosis were found in fewer than 1% of samples from Greenland, and no evidence of Q fever (Coxiella burnetii) was detected. This suggests that many classical zoonoses remain rare in Greenland—but not necessarily irrelevant.

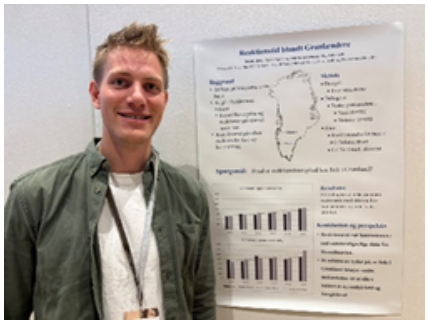
Why is this important for Greenland?

This study shows that infection patterns in Greenland are changing; that leptospirosis may be an overlooked disease in Greenland; and that climate and environmental factors are likely influencing the risk of infection more than previously assumed. The results highlight the importance of continued and up-to-date surveillance of infectious diseases, and indicate that drinking water, hygienic conditions, and environmental changes may affect the occurrence of infectious diseases that have previously been rare or absent in Greenland.

Collaborative Research with Arctic Health Research Centre in Aalborg 2025

The past year of collaboration with Aalborg University has focussed on skeletal health and emergence of results of the study of brown adipose tissue: “Fat that burns Fat” to quote Mette Motzfeldt conducting the study.

Mette Motzfeldt Jensen held her PhD-defence at Ilisimatusarfik in December 2025 extending her presentation at the POLAR symposium during NunaMed in October. She has demonstrated that Greenlanders are designed to survive when exposed to cold, and BAT is yet another strength among people living in Greenland.
Her three years of study were divided between ethical approval (year-1); data collection during the late nights in the PET vault in Aalborg with cooling, biopsies, tissue meddling in fluid nitrogen, and timed blood samplings (year-2); and the publishing of 5 papers from Mette in solid peer-review journals (year-3). The findings explaining how cold adaptation occurs markedly faster in Greenlanders compared to Danes, and a unique involvement of the thyroid for activation. The next step is further analysis of mechanisms involved in its activation, a collaborative work with Steno and University of Copenhagen.



At NunaMed Jacob Bjerg (left) presented data on the speed of reaction to balance challenges under the hypothesis that wandering the vast moorlands and peaks of Greenland requires or develops extraordinary capacities. Cecilie Fricke (centre) presented her work on how to evaluate frailty in a Greenlandic context to support tailoring work-up and treatment to the peoples' needs. Elisabeth (right) presented her extensive work on the pre-operative time, travel and trouble for hip fracture patients in Greenland.

In addition, Jonas & Therese published a systematic review going over the literature of bones among Inuit living in the Arctic. With no limitation to publication year, old studies using single photon absorptiometry performed all across the Arctic were included to inform us of BMC and BMD, and to support the understanding of treatment needs in the ageing population in Greenland.
Paneeraq Noahsen is tying up her work on the unprecedented low occurrence of thyroid autoimmunity and differences in thyroid disease pattern among Greenlanders. Similarly, Karsten Rex continues his efforts to improve understanding and treatment of hepatitis B virus infection among populations in Greenland to improve health in Greenland.
Finally, the Faroese share dietary habits with similar influence on iodine nutrition with local foods posing parallel challenges to the Faroese as to Greenlanders. Hence the mentioning of Herborg Johannesen who wrote her dissertation on diet and iodine intake while in Greenland in 2025 and defended her PhD in Tórshavn in September 2025.

In conclusion, everyday health issues and interesting observations inform the research questions, a hallmark of the collaborative research with Arctic Health Research Centre in Aalborg to improve health and health-education in Greenland, giving promises for continuing investigations that form the basis for a One Health approach of environment shaping health for the people of Greenland.

Stig Andersen MD, PhD, PGCME
Professor, Head of Department, Aalborg University Hospital; AAU Arctic & Ilisimatusarfik

NEWS FROM PHD STUDENTS

Helene Nielsen

In 2024, I began my enrolment as a PhD candidate with a project focused on obesity in Greenland. Obesity is a major and increasing public health concern in Greenland. Currently, I am working on the second part of the project, investigating risk factors for obesity in Greenland. I have attended several scientific conferences where I presented the project, as well as being part of the organising committee for NUAMED 2025, where I presented my work. By providing a nuanced understanding of obesity specific to the Greenlandic population, we hope that the project will provide important knowledge relevant to the Greenlandic healthcare system, policymakers, and public health experts. The PhD project is a collaboration among an interdisciplinary group of researchers from Ilisimatusarfik, Steno Diabetes Center Greenland, and the University of Copenhagen.

Mathilde Tuborg

My PhD project on hand eczema in the fishing industry in Greenland is progressing well. During 2025, I completed the data collection at the four largest Royal Greenland factories, located in Sisimiut, Ilulissat, Qasigiannguit, and Maniitsoq. In parallel, I have been working part-time as a physician at the Skin Clinic at Queen Ingrid's Health Center (DIS), which has provided valuable insight into the culture and living conditions in Greenland. I have presented the project on several occasions, most notably at the NUNAMED Conference and the annual meeting of the Danish Dermatological Society (DDS). I am currently cleaning and preparing the dataset for analysis. Additionally, in collaboration with Malou Media and the Greenlandic Healthcare System, I am developing a nationwide hand eczema prevention campaign to be disseminated via KNR and social media.

Maja Hykkelbjerg Hald

I am a PhD student affiliated with Steno Diabetes Center Greenland, Department of Health & Nature at Ilisimatusarfik, and Aarhus University. In 2025, I was on maternity leave for most of the year and resumed my PhD project in the autumn. My PhD project, Laying the groundwork for self-management support for people with type 2 diabetes or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in Greenland, examines how people living with chronic illness in Greenland experience and manage their disease in everyday life, and how these experiences can inform future approaches to self-management support. Drawing on qualitative interviews with people living with type 2 diabetes or COPD across multiple Greenlandic communities, as well as interviews with healthcare professionals, the project explores everyday life with chronic illness, health literacy, and self-management support as shaped by local, cultural, linguistic, and organisational conditions. The project aims to establish a practice-oriented and contextually grounded analytical framework to inform future health pedagogical initiatives. One article was published in 2023, a second article was accepted in 2025, and a third article focusing on healthcare professionals' perspectives is currently in progress. I expect to submit my PhD thesis in November 2026, and the project has therefore entered its final year, with primary emphasis on analysis, synthesis, and completion of the dissertation.
In 2025, I was part of the organising committee for the NUNAMED conference, gave an oral presentation on digital storytelling, and served as co-chair for two thematic sessions. I also contributed to public research dissemination through participation in a podcast and taught health promotion and preventive nursing within the nursing education programme at Ilisimatusarfik.

Mads Mose Jensen

In 2025, my PhD project, Sleep Apnea Among a High-Risk Population in Greenland, entered its final stages of data analysis and manuscript preparation.
I concluded my clinical leave in the surgical department at Queen Ingrid's Hospital in March 2025 and resumed my full-time PhD studies. During my leave, I had the opportunity to continue my research interests and get involved in other research projects, including a recent publication on implementing a new surgical technique for tonsil reduction: Tonsillotomy by monopolar diathermy, a new procedure in Greenland: a feasibility study.
In April 2025, my family and I returned to Denmark after 3,5 wonderful years in Greenland. I am now back at Zeeland University Hospital's Department of Otorhinolaryngology, focusing on data analysis. Preliminary findings reveal a very high prevalence of sleep apnea among participants, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable diagnostic and treatment pathways in Greenland. We are finalizing these results and preparing the primary manuscript for submission.
Additionally, we are expanding a nursing bachelor's project on the quality of life of Greenlandic patients using CPAP and are preparing an article for submission.
Looking ahead to 2026, I plan to finalize my publications and my PhD thesis by August.

Michael Jensen

My PhD project, which I was officially enrolled in on February of 2025, explores how social understanding, relatedness, and resilience are enacted in Greenlandic everyday life, and how dominant Western psychological theories fit—or fail to fit—these lived realities.

The project is based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork and clinical experience in Nuuk and Paamiut, and potentially Aasiaat, combined with qualitative interviews, social network analysis, and participatory methods developed in collaboration with Greenlandic colleagues. A central focus is the concept of mentalization, which is widely used in Western clinical psychology to describe how people understand themselves and others in terms of mental states. While mentalization theory is often treated as universal, my research suggests that its underlying assumptions do not always resonate with Greenlandic ways of relating, communicating, and making sense of social life.

Across my material, social understanding in Greenland frequently appears as embodied, indirect, and relational rather than verbal, introspective, and explicitly reflective. Silence, shared activities, humor, and nonverbal coordination often carry more social meaning than explicit talk about thoughts and feelings. Rather than being deficits in social cognition, these practices reflect culturally adaptive ways of balancing relatedness and autonomy.

The project draws on cultural psychology, phenomenology, and enactive approaches to social cognition, emphasizing that understanding others emerges through participation in shared situations, environments, and relationships—not primarily through inference about hidden inner states. This perspective allows for a more culturally sensitive understanding of psychological processes in Arctic contexts and highlights potential risks of uncritical transfer of Western assessment tools and treatment models.

At the present stage of the project, the qualitative fieldwork in Nuuk is largely completed, and data analysis and article writing are underway. A second qualitative study focusing on experiences of self and relatedness in Paamiut is in progress, with additional interviews planned to consolidate the empirical basis. In parallel, preparatory work for the more quantitative social network analysis has begun, including development and operationalization of the study design and questionnaire, with data collection planned for the coming period.

The research is conducted as a joint PhD between the Institute of Health and Nature at Ilisimatusarfik and the Department of Anthropology at Aarhus University, with affiliations to the Interacting Minds Centre at Aarhus University and ongoing collaboration with researchers at McGill University. The overall aim is to contribute both to basic cultural psychological theory and to more culturally attuned mental health and social work practices in Greenland.

Bodil Hoffmeyer

2025 has focused on data analysis, dissemination of preliminary findings, taking relevant courses, and organizing NunaMed. I spent the first part of the year on data cleaning and data analysis for two studies on gestational diabetes mellitus and hypertensive disorders of pregnancy in Greenland.

Preliminary results from both studies were presented at several scientific and clinical forums, including NunaMed, Greenland Science Week, at Queen Ingrid's Hospital and Queen Ingrid's Health Care Center, as well as at research meetings at Steno Diabetes Center Greenland.

In addition, I initiated a review focusing on gestational diabetes and hypertensive disorders of pregnancy among Arctic Indigenous populations. Alongside my research activities, I participated in several relevant PhD courses and took an active role in the organization of NunaMed 2025.

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ORAL PRESENTATIONS (PEER REVIEWED ABSTRACTS):

Annesofie Lunde Jensen, Lene Seibæk: Personcentreret pleje og behandling – en vej til kulturelt bæredygtige sundhedsydelser (Key lecture Nunamed 2025)

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Tuborg, M. Hand Eczema in the Fishing Industry in Greenland, Danish Dermatological Society (DDS) Annual Meeting 2025, Copenhagen, Denmark