



Brain health promotion across the lifespan: A Lifebrain & Norwegian Brain Council workshop

7 June 2018, Oslo – Workshop report

This workshop aimed to investigate opportunities and challenges with respect to promoting brain health across the lifespan. The workshop gathered patient organizations with an interest in cognitive and mental health, clinicians and researchers working in the field of brain health, representatives from medical associations, and policymakers. The workshop was jointly organized by [Lifebrain](#) and the Norwegian Brain Council ([Hjernerådet](#)) and gathered approx. 50 participants.

Highlights from the workshop

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL STEPS TO PROMOTE BRAIN HEALTH?

Invest early on in families

The sooner brain conditions are followed-up and treated the better. This is because brain health in young age affects brain health in older age. The primary health care system has an important role to play in identifying families at risk and providing support. For instance, families with children born with extra low birth weight may need extended follow-up programs, which are multidisciplinary and encompass both mental health and cognitive health. Support may also be provided to families experiencing brain disease or brain injury. For instance, programs may be put in place to enable children with brain diseases to be in school, or to help patient experiencing a brain injury to reintegrate the job market. In general, how to promote good brain health among children is largely missing from the current Norwegian brain health strategy.

Increase scientific and professional expertise on brain health

Professionals in primary schools, medical professionals, medical students, municipalities, families, and NAV need to be educated in the importance of brain health for good health. Multidisciplinary collaboration needs to be developed to address the needs of people with brain disorders and injuries. Currently, health care services are too fragmented in this area. Furthermore, there is insufficient focus on the importance of involving families in brain rehabilitation. More research is needed to evaluate the impact of intervention programs on children with brain diseases.

HOW TO INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT BRAIN HEALTH?

Provide evidence

People have different priorities when it comes to health. Providing scientific evidence regarding “the list of things you can do for your brain” may encourage some people to take better care of their brain. Corporations also have a role to play in informing their employees about brain health, for instance by including brain health related activities in their daily operations.

Provide reliable information

There is still a lot of confusion among professionals and in the media regarding brain health. Efforts must be put at helping people find reliable sources of information.

Create awareness

Various environmental factors have cumulative and interactive effects on brain health. What happens early in life also influences brain health later in life. The scientific community, together with health care professionals, should work at informing the public about the importance of maintaining a good brain health during all stages of life. As was mentioned during the workshop, *“better to start earlier, but it is never too late”*.

Next steps

Lifebrain plans to launch an online survey to investigate the views of a variety of stakeholders on brain health. The online survey will consist of approx. 25 multiple-choice questions to explore the respondents’:

- Perceptions of the brain and brain health,
- Interest in maintaining a healthy brain,
- Willingness to know more about own brain health, and,
- Willingness to act to maintain a good brain health and prevent brain disease development.

The survey will be launched in several European countries and will be made available in several languages including English, Norwegian, Spanish, Catalan, Danish and German. **If you would like to participate in a small pilot to test the questions in the survey, please send an email to Isabelle Budin Ljøsne: Isabelle.budin.ljosne@fhi.no. The pilot will take place during the fall of 2018/winter of 2019.**

Useful links to initiatives within brain health

- [European Academy of Neurology conference, Oslo, June 2019](#)
- [European Brain Council and its white paper](#)
- [European Stroke Action Plan 2018-2030](#)

[Facebook photo report from the workshop](#)

[Lifebrain public lecture “Ta vare på hjernen!”, Litteraturhuset, 6 June 2018, on youtube](#)