

Unni Edvardsen

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

### **Comparative study of domiciliary care for elderly people in Japan and Norway**

The aims of the research were to explore the relationship between elderly recipients of home help services and home helpers, and to describe and compare work conditions of home helpers in Japan and Norway.

The findings are based on two primary sources of data: Interviews with home helpers (21), recipients (23) and managers (10), and a survey of home helpers. The same interview guides and questionnaire were used in both countries. Data from 366 questionnaires has been analyzed using SPSS.

Findings indicate that Japanese and Norwegian home helpers share some common characteristics and challenges, but their work conditions are quite different. They are similar in the relationship to recipients. Home helpers in both countries find their work meaningful due to the important role that they feel they play in the lives of recipients. They expressed appreciation for getting to know elderly people rich in life experience.

As for the content of work, Norwegian home helpers clean more than their colleagues in Japan, who have more varied tasks, such as cooking and shopping groceries. The data suggests that Norwegian home helpers have physically harder and more stressing jobs, but better work conditions than home helpers in Japan. The majority of home helpers in Japan are registered workers with unstable work load and poor salary, while in Norway, most home helpers are public employees with a stable income, though also many Norwegian home helpers work part time.

Japan and Norway face similar challenges in terms of recruitment and lack of time for cultivating social and emotional aspects of care, thereby reducing the sense of satisfaction among recipients and the sense of meaningfulness that is so important to helpers in order to continue doing a good job.