



AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Advancing Knowledge, Solving Human Problems

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Oral Presentation Session

(5-0390) Governing health and welfare of Norwegian women through mammography screening: May rights to health care go hand in hand with duties of health care?

📅 Saturday, December 2 ⌚ 11:15 AM - 11:30 AM 📍 Location: Marriott, Thurgood Marshall East

Presenter(s)

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Norway has had a public breast cancer-screening program since 2004. Biannually a personal invitation letter stating a prescheduled time and place for a mammography is sent to all women age 50-69. This “nudging” maximizes program attendance.

Three out of four women participate. It is a popular and recognized program, valued as a social good by many women. The program reaches out to women in every corner of the country; custom-built buses providing mammography-screening cover rural communities.

Within the Nordic welfare states, health rights and health duties may not be in opposition – but reciprocally related. Mau (2004) argues people’s support for the welfare state is based on a “moral economy” grounded on shared moral assumptions about social exchange.

I draw on an ethnographic study from Norwegian screening units; interviews with eligible women; and debates about efficiency, benefits and harms of mammography screening in Norway.

As one woman said: “It’s wise to get this checked out. After all it’s a service that almost greets you at your front door”. She had skipped her appointment when the bus visited her community two years ago. “I had a bad conscious when I did not attend. Because, if it had *then* turned out I had needed to be here, then that would have been a terrible feeling, wouldn’t it?”

Could this bad conscious illustrate some invisible liabilities of mammography screening health policies – which through body politics and public discourses is blurring the boarder between a right to health care and a duty of health care?