

Foreword

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For over a century, the Commonwealth Fund has worked to advance a singular mission: to enhance the common good. Today, that means promoting a high-performing health system that delivers better access, improved quality, and greater efficiency, especially for society's most vulnerable. We do this through rigorous research, evidence-based policy innovation, and one of our most enduring and proudest traditions – The Harkness Fellowships in Health Care Policy and Practice.

The Harkness Fellowships were originally founded with the bold and forward-looking vision to promote international understanding by offering emerging leaders the opportunity to study, travel, and grow through exposure to new systems and ideas.

That spirit endures today.

Since its founding in 1925, the Harkness Fellowships have served as a bridge between ideas, people, systems, and countries. Over the decades, the program has evolved to meet the challenges of the moment, from its early emphasis on transatlantic academic exchange, to its current focus on policy, practice, and health system innovation. Yet its core remains the same: to foster future leaders, build bridges across borders, and generate insights that improve health care for all.

Norway joined this global Fellowship network in 2010, thanks to the foundational support of Norwegian Knowledge Centre for Health Services, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health and the Research Council of Norway. Since then, 15 Norwegian fellows have taken part, including the current fellow, exploring timely issues including telemedicine, overdiagnosis, leadership, and equity in care, contributing to and improving health policy in both the U.S. and Norway. Their work has led to influential

publications, actionable policy advice, and innovations now deployed in Norwegian health services.

The Harkness Fellowship is much more than a research opportunity – it is, as many alumni describe it, a “transformative” life experience. The program offers mid-career professionals a unique opportunity to spend a year in the United States conducting policy-relevant research, working closely with leading mentors and institutions, and gaining insight into the complexities of the U.S. health system. Beyond the rigor of the work produced, we see first-hand how the fellowship cultivates enduring professional networks, cross-border friendships, and broadened perspectives that often reshapes careers and, by extension, health systems.

This volume details the work of Norwegian Harkness Fellows over the past 15 years. It reflects their deep commitment to learning, innovation, and cross-country engagement. It is a resource for future leaders and proof of the lasting impacts of international exchange.

It also reminds us of the crucial role that partners play in making this work possible. Our partnership with Norway is strong and valued. The steady support from our Norwegian partners and diligent work of the fellows they support prove a shared belief that international learning helps solve national challenges. As one fellow said, “True leadership lies in everyday actions – sharing knowledge, offering resources, and helping others shine.”

As we mark the Harkness Fellowship centennial in 2025, we celebrate the program’s history with a forward-looking view toward its continued relevance. In an era defined by seemingly insurmountable challenges and complexity, the need for cross-border learning is greater than ever. We hope this collection will inform, inspire, and guide future Harkness Fellows, and the broader community of people working to improve health across borders.

With thanks to all who contributed. We look forward to the work ahead.

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