

Successfully matching patients with specialized physiotherapists – results from a Norwegian innovation project

Ramberg C¹, Ringvold GH¹, Ladehaug T², Stokke S³, Ørstavik K⁴, Rosenberger AD¹

¹Norwegian Centre for Rare Diseases – unit for Neuromuscular disorders, University Hospital of North Norway, Tromsø, Norway
²Neuromuscular Disorders Association of Norway (NMD Norway), Oslo, Norway
³Norwegian Centre for Rare Diseases – unit Frambu, Siggerud, Norway
⁴Unit for Inborn and Hereditary Neuromuscular Disorders, Department of Neurology, Oslo University Hospital, Oslo, Norway



Background

Patients with rare genetic neuromuscular disorders report having difficulties locating specialized physiotherapists (PTs) on their own and seek help from the patient organization and health care personnel. We therefore developed and launched a web-based national and comprehensive overview of specialized PTs in Norway. The webpage is designed as an interactive map with search and filter functions accessible by both cell phone and computer (Fig.2).

Aim

We aimed to provide patients with an easier access to the locations and contact details of all PTs specialized in NMDs in Norway by developing a digital overview.

Materials and Methods

The project was carried out in work packages (WPs), where WP1 was webpage development in collaboration with IT company Helse Nord IKT. In WP2 we extensively searched for and contacted all PTs found through web searches, contact lists and acquaintances. PTs who were interested and qualified for registration were added to the overview. In WP3 we focused on promoting the website to patients, in collaboration with the patient organization, by social media, presentations at events and articles in their members magazine. Similarly, PTs were targeted through stands, posters and presentations at relevant meetings and conferences, social media and published articles and ads in the trade union website and magazine.

Results

By August 2026, 132 PTs were registered in our overview. From launch, September 2nd, 2025, the website has had a total of 892 users (658 new, 234 returning). Most users are patients (61%), while 39% are healthcare personnel (Fig.1). We observe an effect of our targeted promotion of the website by the following peaks in data traffic. We have received considerable positive feedback from patients as well as registered PTs and healthcare personnel on the use of the site. Search history indicates differences in the interest of visitors regarding county, age of patient and type of PT practice (Fig.3).

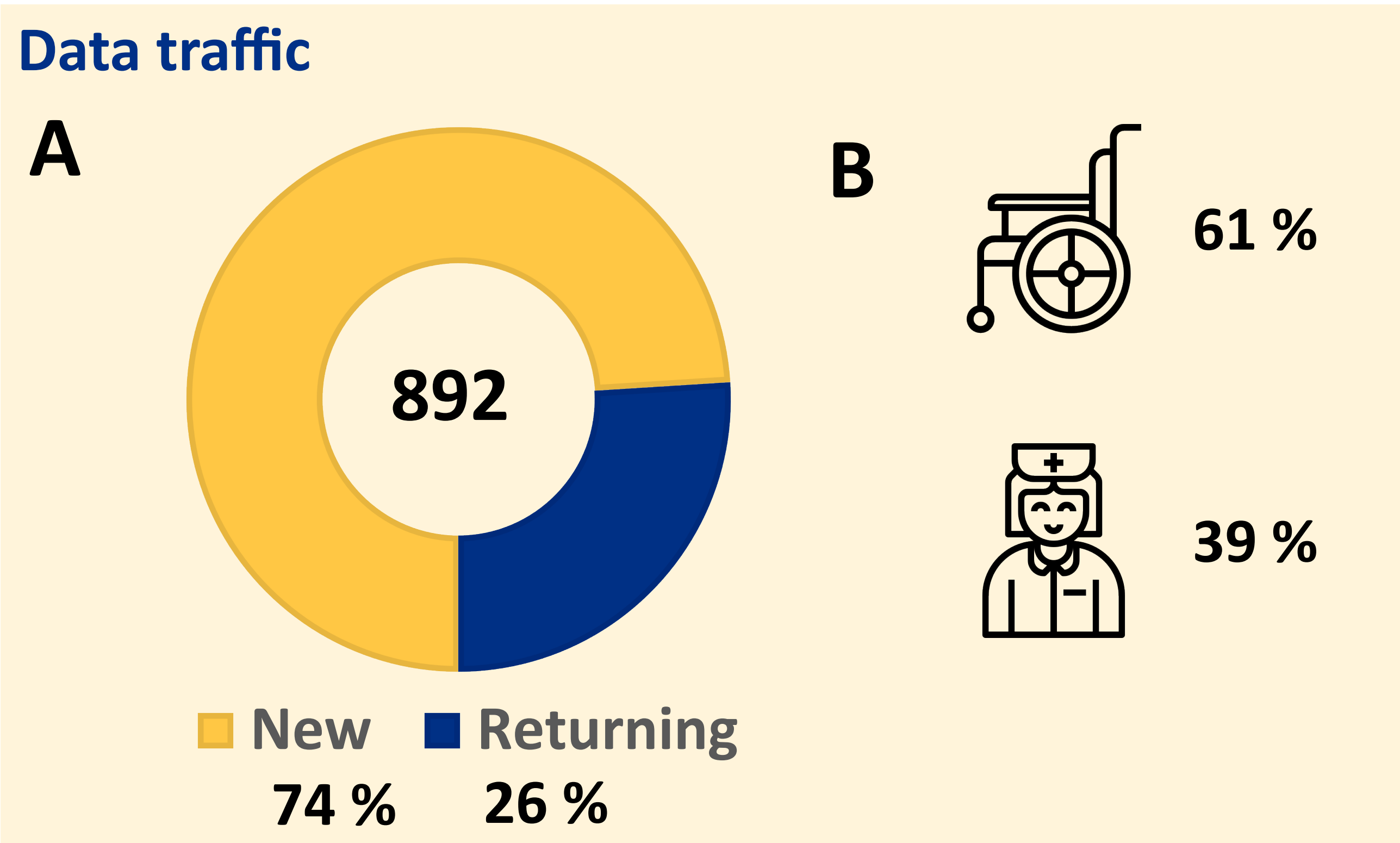


Figure 1. Overview of the data traffic of our website. Panel (A) shows the total number of users (n=892), divided into “new” and “returning” users. Panel (B) shows the percentage of webpage users being patients (61%) vs. healthcare personnel (39%).



Figure 2. Overview of our website www.fysioforsjeldne.no as viewed from a cell phone. The webpage allows the user to filter on age of patient, type of PT practice (publicly contracted vs. private vs. municipal) and county. All registered PTs can be viewed either as a list or as “pins” in the map. By clicking on a pin one would get the contact details of that specific PT.

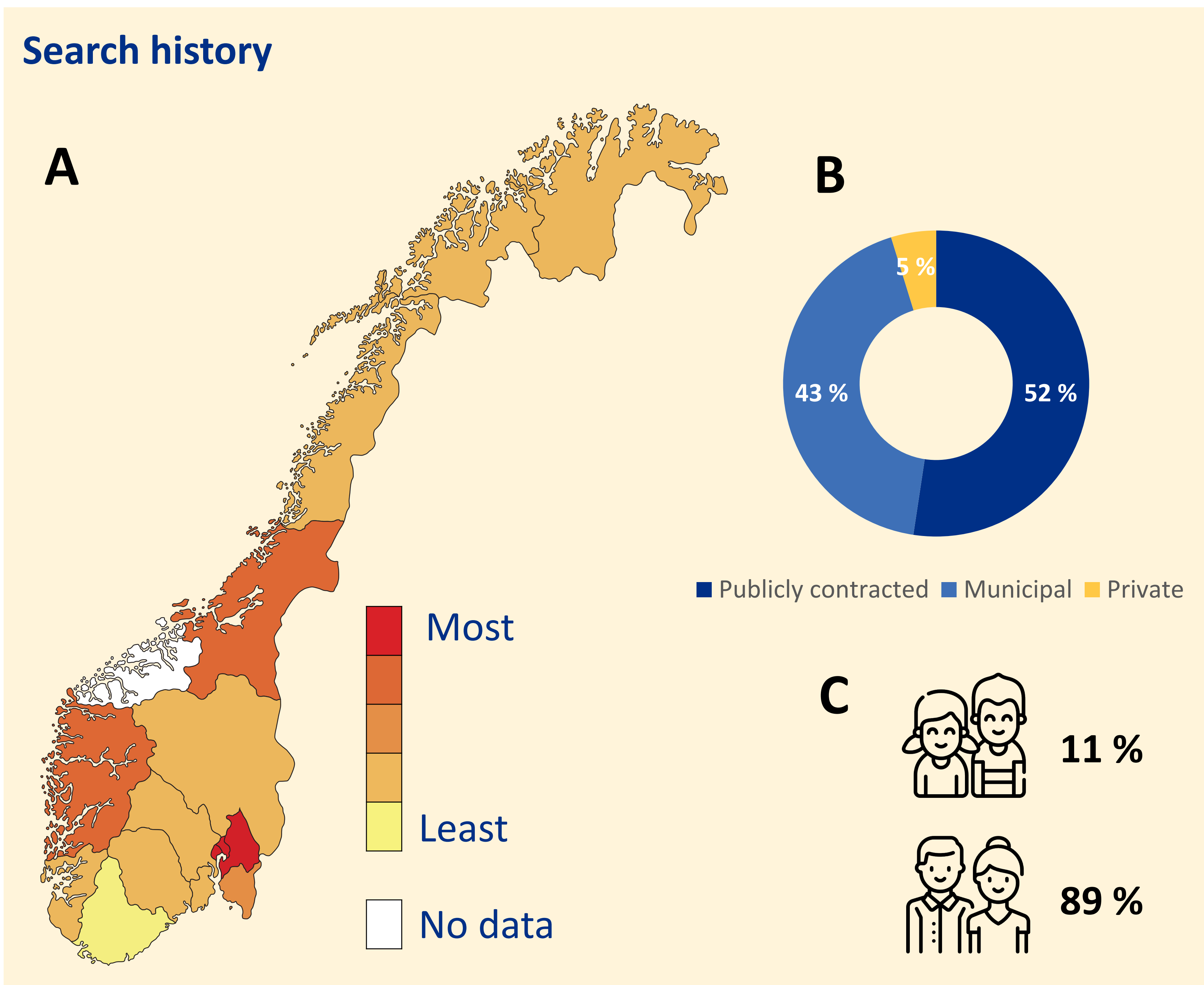


Figure 3. Overview of the search history of our website. Panel (A) shows the frequency of each county being searched, from most (red) to least (yellow). Panel (B) shows the search distribution between PT practice types (publicly contracted vs. municipal vs. private). Panel (C) shows the most searched age group for the patients (children vs. adults).



We have successfully developed a digital tool to help “match” patients with specialized physiotherapists. Our website is also of great value to healthcare personnel that meet and guide neuromuscular patients in clinic.

Next, we will identify regions of the country with lower coverage of PTs, for then to provide targeted training and knowledge enhancement in given regions. In addition, we will create a national network for the PTs to facilitate networking and potential collaborations.