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## Abdominal rectus diastasis – patients experience of the Swedish health care system and expectations of surgery

### An ongoing qualitative interview study

**Aim:** to investigate how patients with abdominal rectus diastasis (ARD) are treated in Swedish health care and whether surgery meet the patients' expectations.

**Method:** purposeful sampling of adults treated surgically for ARD in the northern region of Sweden.



7 patients have been interviewed currently.

*"I stopped exercising.... I felt no support from my core..."*

*"I was surprised to receive help... I prepared a letter stating my case, explaining my symptoms..."*

All patients reported abdominal wall instability, many had abdominal pain or discomfort. Female participants feared being denied care but were pleasantly surprised when referred for surgery.

## MIND THE GAPS

*"I expected getting strength back, being able to flex my muscles.. Moving normally again"*

*"I expected at least, that the fear of my intestines falling out would be less.. That I would be able to have support from my abdomen"*

Most expected improved core function post-surgery. Some report satisfaction and improved function, others still experience pain.

*"My function have improved, I can sit up from the bed without problems now"*

*"I can exercise like I did before the diagnosis... I ran a half marathon. I notice how much the body can handle now"*

*"I still have lower back pain.. I don't think I will ever get my body back"*

All interviewed patients describe a lack of information about postoperative rehabilitation. Many of them experience a fear of moving and have questions about exercise that the surgeons cannot answer.