

Russian Nurses Learning Swedish Online

Swedish-speaking nurses are needed. For this reason, Svenska Kulturfonden is funding an internet course on Swedish aimed at Russian nurses. A good idea, says midwife Natalia Shebet.

Sphygmomanometer, syringe, drug... There will be a vocabulary list on the nursing field on the vårdsvenskan.fi website, and the vocabulary list is supplemented continually.

Learnwell, a company owned by Veronica Gilhooly, has received 100 000 euros for developing and implementing an internet-based Swedish course intended for Russian nurses.

If the course proves to be a success, it can be translated into other languages such as Vietnamese. But we start with Russian. The thought has been brewing for a long time, tells Tove Ekman from Kulturfonden.

It has been in our action plan for a long time that we would support the teaching of Swedish for immigrants working in certain professions. The nurses are a strategically important group. There is a need for Swedish-speaking nurses, particularly in elderly care.

Why the Russian nurses in particular?

- There are already many Russian nurses working in Finland. We are also targeting the nurses living in Russia, who may be planning on moving to Finland. If the project is successful, we may also invest in other languages and professions in the future.

The pages are free of charge, and there is material that the nurses can use to study independently. Those passing all ten levels of an interactive test may participate in a free week-long intensive Swedish conversation course.

Midwife Natalia Shebet from Helsinki considers the course a good idea.

Are you planning to attend the course?

- Absolutely! I can speak Finnish well enough that I can start a new language. When moving to Finland in 1997, I could not study two new languages simultaneously. The move took a lot of strength.

Do you need Swedish in your work?

- I encounter Swedish-speaking patients on a weekly basis. It would be beneficial for me to be able to speak Swedish. It is important to receive care in your native tongue.

She feels that the internet course would work well in learning the basics.

- After that, real-life practice would be needed, however.

Shebet believes that the course will be attractive in Russia as well.

- Moving here, Swedish would not be sufficient, though. You must be able to speak Finnish as well. Veronica Gilhooly is wholly committed in the planning. The website is already completed and she is now loading content there. She is interviewing the nurses to figure out what vocabulary they need.

Birgitta Dahl from Arcada polytechnic college is in the project as an expert. Gilhooly is also relying on artists and translators.

- There is a need for 100 hand-drawn images for the website. 200 of them have to do with nursing profession. There is also a need for audio files that the users may listen, to hear how the words are

pronounced in Finnish-Swedish, Gilhooly says.

In addition to the nursing profession vocabulary, there are also other words that will be needed in discussing in the nursing home with the clients. Gilhooly is collecting newspaper articles on the website that deal with elderly care. They are used as reading comprehension exercises.

- There are also exercises on using Swedish on the phone.

In addition to Swedish courses, there is information that the nurses may need in applying for work in Finland.

Links to official pages, information about the Finnish-Swedish community and the elderly care services in Finland. With the help of a CV-tool, you can send applications directly to hospitals, nursing homes, and other care facilities. The registered users may create an applicant profile through which the employers may contact the individual, and there will be a list of job openings on the website.

There is material in Swedish, Russian, Finnish, and in English.

Gilhooly hopes that the pages are ready for launching by the fall.

- My company is advertising the website in Finland and in six largest cities in Russia.

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Veronica Gilhooly is designing Vårdsvenska.fi-website that will be launched in the fall.

Photo: Annika Wilms

Natalia Shebet's native tongue is Russian, and she works as a midwife in Helsinki. She wants to learn Swedish and considers the website a good idea.

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