The education and knowledge of the public have increased dramatically during the past few decades. Patients have also become increasingly knowledgeable about their disease. The general concept of empowerment is rather recent, especially regarding its application in health care. In the present thesis this concept is analysed in general terms and in relation to health care and patient empowerment.

The Swedish Health Law states that patients using the health service have the right to full information about their disease and to determine what treatment to receive. The present study addresses the question to what extent do patients and patient organisations exert their rights in this context. Diabetes is a common chronic disease in which patient information and co-operation are particularly important for the long-term outcome. Patients with diabetes were selected because the diabetic association is known to be particularly influential.

The members of two local branch organisations of diabetes patients (one in a big city and one in the north of Sweden) were invited to take part in the present study.

The results of a survey and individual interviews of the members of the two branch organisations were analysed to illustrate how patients and their organisations can be empowered. Only small differences were found between the two organisations. The analysis indicated that members in both organisations were more interested in personal information and socialising than gaining influence and become empowered. This finding may partly be due to their confident belief in the Swedish health care system.

It is concluded that, regarding health care, patients and their organisations still have a way to go in exercising their right to empowerment.

*Sophie Söderholm Werkö* is a researcher affiliated to Stockholm School of Business, Stockholm University and the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies at Södertörn University College. This is her doctoral dissertation.