

# **The Danish Ostomy association COPA**

## **Background:**

COPA was founded in 1951 as the first ostomy association in the world. The letters "COPA" stand for **CO**lostomy **PA**tient, as it was the most common ostomy at that time.

The association's membership has been stable over the years with approximately 3500 members, of which 500 are supportive members (Denmark has approximately 10 – 12.000 people with ostomy or reservoir).

## **The association COPA**

COPA is represented around Denmark with 16 local chapters, with their own local boards and economies. Additionally there are four interest groups: FAP-group, Parent group, youth group, and the urostomy group.

On national level the association is organized with an executive committee consisting of the elected president, vice-president, and 4 elected local chairmen, all elected for two years. The committee is responsible for the services COPA provides. The election takes place once a year at a meeting for all chairmen of the local chapters.

There are two annual meetings for the chairmen of the local chapters. One meeting is a budget meeting, where the events for next year are planned. The other meeting confirms the past year's budget and the election to the executive committee are held here as well.

COPA's income comes from membership fees, grants from the government, support of the Cancer Society, advertisements in the magazine. The association has one full time employee in the secretariat and the national chairman has a half time position.

## **Copa's main objectives are...**

- To make the situation better for ostomy/pouch operated and people with other diseases in the intestines.
- To serve as a mouthpiece for all ostomy patients when facing the public health system.
- To provide free help and advice to people before, during and/or after their hospitalization on topics like "how to live a normal life with an ostomy". You don't have to be a member to receive this guidance.
- To inform the public and health system about living with an ostomy, mostly conducted as education in nursing schools and participating in seminars and exhibitions.
- Act to prevent the many taboos about living with an ostomy.
- To arrange events for members, in the form of a summer Holliday, a midlife weekend for the 40 to 55 years group, children's camp, local meetings, where the local chapters hold a mix of social and informative meetings for their members.
- To help other countries build ostomy associations, and give practical help, by sending spare ostomy products to help those who are in need.

## **Internet and members magazine**

COPA has its own website ([www.copa.dk](http://www.copa.dk)), where both public and members can find information about ostomy types and care. The association also has its own member's magazine which is published 6 times a year and sent to all members, hospitals, schools and manufacturers of ostomy aids etc. in Denmark.