

HEALTH PROMOTION IN AN INTERCULTURAL HOSPITAL RELATED TO ITS COMMUNITY: SOME TOOLS

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In 2004 in Italy live 2.700.000 of migrant people, coming from 194 countries; in Emilia-Romagna there are more than 200.000, belonging to 164 nationalities. In the city of Bologna immigrants are almost 6.6% of the resident population. The people who are legally present have the same rights as Italian people, such as education, employment, housing, social and health care, but the newcomers often don't know them or they are not always able to exercise them properly. In order to enhance the integration of this population and a correct use of the public services, the society must implement structural and social-cultural changes; informative and health promoting interventions are especially needed in the field of Health Care.

If immigrants are not correctly informed, they will not learn how to deal properly with the every day's living problems, especially with the health care system. Often migrants turn to the most experienced services, like emergency, for simple diseases, instead of referring to GP or outpatient clinics; on the other side in many cases they turn to the health care system when the disease is at a fairly advanced stage.

People working with immigrants are very important intermediaries between them and the local society; they work in a "neutral zone", where communication is facilitated, and they must be aware of their role of mediator. This attitude will generate many benefits; the proper use of the services will be cost/effective and will produce health improvement for the individuals and for the community and a better resources management for the Health Care System.

The Local Health Unit (LHU) of Bologna has structured and experimented numerous services and activities for migrants since 1991. In 1999 our LHU joined the Health Promoting Hospital (HPH) network and started the "Intercultural Hospital Project", a comprehensive process for the strengthening and the re-engineering of the territorial and hospital services. The main pillar is based on creating a Network between health and social professionals, also strictly connected with the representatives of other local agencies, such as volunteers, groups of patients, local government and other stakeholders of the community.

The process has been supported by the creation of a special Organizational Unit, the "Progetto Speciale Immigrati". The PSI's

mission is to detect the needs, to plan, to program, to coordinate and to evaluate interventions, to promote, working within or outside the Local Health Unit. These could also be achieved by sharing common objectives, which are explicitly mentioned in a specific chapter of the "Plan of health Actions" dedicated to immigrants and to the local population who are at risk of social exclusion.

Some actions, tools and methodologies:

- analysis of laws, medical literature and experiences at local, national and international level;
- benchmarking;
- involvement of all stakeholders of the community in one or more working group;
- Free Telephone Line (800 66 33 66): every afternoon and three mornings a week it offers in eight different languages professional counselling to immigrants, it gives information on the widest needs and questions regarding the socio-sanitary services;
- training courses and update for multicultural mediators;
- multicultural menu and experimental course for dieticians;
- analysis of the quality perceived on different health services;
- information activities, education and health promotion for different groups of patients;
- 14 hour-basic training courses about the migration medicine;
- Save Prostitution Project;
- enquiry on health and sanitary surveillance for the indigent Italians and foreigners, including a health report about all foreigners, those in prison, the excluded, etc for a total number of 1200;
- International Cooperation Activity.

A web site "The Colours of Health" was recently activated within the site of the Local Health Unit of Bologna. The site is dedicated to the migration medicine and to the intercultural Hospital project. The aim of the project is to promote migrants' health through:

- 1) sharing experiences and information;
- 2) creating a point of reference for all professionals who belong to different public institutions and volunteers who are involved on migrants' health;
- 3) implementing, enhancing and facilitating the use of the "best practices";
- 4) connecting all private and public structures involved in the improvement of the access of migrants to the health and social services;
- 5) giving an easy access to laws, projects, references addresses, informative brochures in different languages, links etc., to all professionals who operate in this sector and to all citizens who are interested.

Many other projects, founded by the Italian Ministry of Health where carried out. The one named "Assistance and Sanitary Surveillance for the indigent, both Italians and foreigners" has produced a report on the health status of 1200 persons, living in different centres, including the town's prison. This project was carried out together with Sicilian partners and it has demonstrated great access difficulties to primary health care. The project "Interregional Experimentation to fight access

inequalities to the Health services" was activated as an ideal continuation of the previous one. After studying the data for hospital admission and registration to the National Health Service, the activities were focused on three different fields: maternal and child care, early breast cancer detection, registration to the local health services and use of primary health care (GP - family doctor).

The on going activities and those that have already been carried out could be summed up as follows:

1) **for the patients:** advertisement campaign and group meetings for those who received a letter from the local health unit, to improve the "on call" access to breast screening together with surgical operation on early diagnosis of breast cancer; regular weekly meetings on health education for two groups of nomad women regarding personal hygiene, nutrition, contraception, correct use of sanitary fixtures, child care, education to prevention;

2) **for the organisation and its professionals:** involvement of the U.O. personal and professional training, gathering of relevant materials and different experiences, reformulation and adjustment of the "on call methods" and of reception (including a mediator) relevant to the characteristic of each nationality (Filipinos Arabs, Italian indigents, Romanian nomads), simplification, improvement, translation and publicity of the procedures for the registration to the local health services;

3) **for the citizens:** campaign on the promotion of the different services, like the free telephone line and the web site, also through TV and radio.

4) **for the organization:** the screening centre will be well equipped and will have specific members of staff (intercultural mediators and feminine staff).

The creation of a specific software with translated informative message to be transmitted from a personal computer to the foreign patient in the waiting room and the presence of a mediator are already foreseen.