

Subproject A: Amsterdam Conference

TITLE: Improvement of language and cultural services supporting clinical communication: the Italian experience

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SHORT DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

The project consisted in planning and setting up a service of cultural mediation in the following wards: Emergency, Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Unlike other countries, in which a pure interpretation service has been set up, in Italy the importance of implementing a service of cultural mediation has been stressed. The difference between interpretation and cultural mediation lies in the role of the person, who, not only translates the words of the patients, but adds also his/her deep knowledge of the culture (for they are from the same ethnic group as the patients).

In the first part of the project, we hired a cultural mediator for the Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu languages in the hospital of Guastalla, a small town in the province of Reggio Emilia, where the rate of foreign residents is the highest in the area (about 8%).

In the second part, our organisation decided to carry out a one year experimentation in the whole area of the Reggio Emilia Province (6 hospitals), setting up a service managed by external social cooperatives. During the experimentation, the service is only addressed to the above-said departments in the hospital and to Paediatric and Gynaecologic community services (for urgent needs of other departments or services we have a differentiated procedure). At the same time, the social cooperatives in charge of the services are carrying out training courses for cultural mediators and health care staff.

AIMS: the project aims at improving communication between health care services and migrant patients through the improvement of cultural mediation within the health care organisation.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS: At the end of three months experimentation (first part of project) in the Guastalla hospital, questionnaires have been filled out both by the patients who used the service and by the hospital staff. Patients turned out to be quite satisfied with the service provided, while the staff expressed different opinions, due to a non homogeneous rate of utilisation of the service.

For what concerns the implementation of the extended service, we have created an assessment tool in order to monitor and evaluate each intervention of mediation, so that at the end of the year of experimentation we will be able to adjust the service and even extend it to all the departments and services.