

LIVING CONDITIONS AND FACTORS AFFECTING THE USE OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES: A STUDY AMONG MIGRANTS FROM EUROPEAN, (NON EU) ASIAN AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN GREECE

Daphne Kaitelidou¹, Chryssoula Lemonidou² *, Petros Galanis³, Panayota Sourtzi⁴, Olga Siskou⁵, Maria Kalogeropoulou⁶, Olympia Konstantakopoulou⁷ and Giorgos Charalambous⁸

¹Department of Nursing, University of Athens, Greece, dkaitelid@nurs.uoa.gr

²Department of Nursing, University of Athens, Greece, clemonid@nurs.uoa.gr

³Department of Nursing, University of Athens, Greece, pegalan@nurs.uoa.gr

⁴Department of Nursing, University of Athens, Greece, psourtzi@nurs.uoa.gr

⁵Department of Nursing, University of Athens, Greece, olsiskou@nurs.uoa.gr

⁶Department of Nursing, University of Athens, Greece, makaloger@yahoo.gr

⁷Department of Nursing, University of Athens, Greece, olympiak1982@hotmail.com

⁸Emergency Department, Hippocratio Hospital of Athens, Greece, drcharalambus@yahoo.gr

* Corresponding Author

Abstract

Background: Evidence shows an ethnic segregation in housing and other living conditions between natives and non natives where migrants are shown to be most vulnerable with that usually having an impact on their health. Migrants in general, are considered as a high risk group, vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, facing many barriers in accessing and using social and health services.

Aim: The aim of the survey was to shed light on the living conditions of this population in Greece along with the factors affecting the use of health care services by migrants in Greece.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted during November 2012-April 2013. The study population consisted of 1152 immigrants from European, Asian and African countries living in Greece. Additionally, 702 interviews were conducted with natives. A convenient sampling method was used in both cases. A questionnaire was developed including information about demographics, health status, difficulties in health services access etc. Statistical analysis included Pearson's χ^2 test, χ^2 test for trend and student's t-test.

Results: Approximately, 52.6% of the participants were males, while mean age of the sample was 37.6 years (SD=10) and mean duration of stay in Greece was 10.9 years (SD=6.7). Ninety-one percent of the participants stated that they shared the same house with 3.4 (SD=2.6) more people. The relative percentage was higher for migrants compared with the native population ($p<0.001$) and higher for Asians compared with the other migrant groups. One percent stated that they were homeless and 40.8% that they lived in the basement or the ground floor, in a greater percentage from the natives ($p<0.001$). 72.7% lived in a home that was not sufficiently heated during the winter months (21.9% not at all and 50.8% a little or moderately) and that percentage was also increased compared with the natives (with 8.1% reporting no heating at their homes) ($p<0.001$). As for the use of health services, it usually concerns emergency services as no co-payments are required for their use. 25.6% of the participants used emergency department services during the last year, with migrants from Albania and African countries, using these services more often than the other groups ($p<0.001$). Regarding the use of preventive services, it was highly associated with the existence of health coverage.

Conclusions: This study shows a clear ethnic segregation in housing and other living conditions which affect health, between migrants and natives but also between different migrant groups in Greece, where Asian and African migrants were most vulnerable. Migrants in Greece face off additional difficulties concerning health services use and the populations differed substantially with Europeans showing better knowledge of the health care system. The findings underlie the need for more and better quality research on the topic.

Keywords: Living conditions, Use of health services, Migrants, Greek Health System