Migrants’ Access to Health Care Services in Greece During the Economic Crisis

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This research has been co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund – ESF) and Greek national funds through the Operational Program "Education and Lifelong Learning" of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) - Research Funding Program: «THALIS – UOA The Detection, Transcription, and Analysis of Inequalities to Healthcare Access for Immigrants Living in Greece»
State of the art

- Recent research conducted in Greece, suggests limited knowledge of the health care system and decreased utilization of the health care services by migrants and other vulnerable groups.

- During the present economic crisis, access was further reduced, due to reduced resources for health care, increased demand and waiting times, increased copayments and decreased ability to make informal payments.

- The objective of the project is twofold:
  A) To identify, record and analyze any restrictions on the access and quality of health services for migrants in Greece
  B) To empower and facilitate the health care access for migrants
The economic crisis in Greece

- Population at risk of poverty (%): 76, 73.5, 73.1, 72.1, 55.7
- Population at risk of poverty and social exclusion (%): 28.1, 27.6, 27.7, 31.0, 34.6
- Households with central heating (%): 23.3, 22.7, 23.8, 24.8, 26.8
- Unemployment (% of population): 7.6, 9.5, 12.5, 17.7, 24.2

Migrants in Greece

- Migrants: 9% of the total population in 2009
- More vulnerable to social and economic disadvantage, access to health care and health outcomes
- Documented migrants: same rights as Greek citizens if they have insurance

- Albania: 58%
- Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia etc.): 14%
- Asia and Africa: 10%
- All other: 18%
Aim of the study: to explore perceived barriers to access and utilization of healthcare services by migrants in Greece

Study population: 511 migrants from European and Asian countries (both documented and undocumented)

Tool: Questionnaire including info on sociodemographic characteristics, health status, public health services knowledge and utilization and perception of barriers in health services access

Face to face interviews

Statistical Analysis: Pearson’s $x^2$, $x^2$ for trend, Student’s t test and ANOVA using SPSS 21
## Demographic characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>281 (55.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>229 (44.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>35.9 (12.1)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of stay in Greece</strong></td>
<td>8.5 (6.8)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country of birth</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Europeans (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldavia)</td>
<td>211 (41.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asians (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines, Afghanistan)</td>
<td>300 (58.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documented migrants</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>337 (66.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>173 (33.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthcare insurance booklet/card</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>179 (35.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>331 (64.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>279 (54.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>231 (45.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Mean (standard deviation)
Most common barriers

- Among the most important problems in accessing health care services were poor knowledge of the available health care services, long waiting times in hospitals, difficulties in communication with health professionals and high cost of health care.

- Increased ability to speak Greek was associated with increased health services knowledge ($x^2=97$, $p<0.001$).
Over the past 12 months, was there a time when you needed to use healthcare services but you couldn’t?

Yes, 91 (17.8%)
Long Waiting times

- Visiting public hospital outpatient clinics (17%, n=86)
- Hospitalisation in a public hospital during the last 12 months (8.0%, n=41)
Bribe/”under the table” illegal payments

Of those hospitalized in a public hospital:

Did you pay the legal participation fee, if applicable?
- Yes, 29 (78.4%)

Bribe/”under the table” illegal payment
- Yes, 15 (36.6%)

Mean value for bribe/”under the table” illegal payment
- 347 euros (SD=307)

Mean personal monthly income: 508 euros!
Over the past 12 months, was there a time where you needed medications, but you couldn’t obtain them?

Yes, 137 (26.9%)
Access of health care services

- Difficulties in accessing **public hospital outpatient clinics**
- Yes, 86 (17%)
**Use of health care services**

- **Illness during the last 12 months (25.7%)**

  - Visiting (doctor, municipal clinic, NGOs clinics): 58.7%
  - Visiting Accidents and Emergency Department of a public hospital: 12.2%
  - Getting advice (friends, family, employee): 15.3%
  - Didn't do anything: 11.5%
Use of health care services

- Injury during the last 12 months (20.4%)

- Visiting (doctor, municipal clinic, NGOs clinics): 16.3%
- Visiting pharmacist: 14.4%
- Visiting Accident and Emergency Department of a public hospital: 44.2%
- Getting advice (doctor, healthcare professional): 2.9%
- Didn't do anything: 20.2%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Europeans</th>
<th>Asians</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over the past 12 months, was there a time where you needed medications, but you couldn’t obtain them?</td>
<td>17,10%</td>
<td>33,80%</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare insurance booklet/card</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16,80%</td>
<td>32,30%</td>
<td>p&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the past 12 months, was there a time where you needed medications, but you couldn’t obtain them?</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20,80%</td>
<td>p=0.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSIONS

- Only a small percentage of the respondents reported an adequate knowledge of public health services in Greece.
- A high percentage reported unmet needs for various reasons.
- Language barriers and miscommunication were also reported.
- Unmet needs were correlated with insurance status and documentation of the migrants.