

ITALIAN NATIONAL FOCAL POINT INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND MIGRANTS

ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED FROM 1997 TO 2013:
RESEARCH, INTERCULTURAL PREVENTION AND TRAINING



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INTRODUCTION

The European Commission (Action against AIDS Programme), in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) has been financing the 'AIDS and Mobility' Project since 1991 with the aim of starting HIV/AIDS/MST preventive intervention for mobile populations (immigrants, ethnic minorities, refugees, truck drivers, homeless youths, soldiers and foreign born prostitutes) of the European Union. Such a Project, coordinated by the Netherlands Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NIGZ) of Worden (Holland), has reached three main goals during the latest years:

- Identifying the specific needs of the migrant populations of EU Nations;
- Starting preventive intervention on HIV/AIDS/MST infections addressed to foreign citizens;
- Building a NFP Net in any member state to have a deeper vision of the European situation together with a closer look between different experiences.





ITALIAN NATIONAL FOCAL POINT - INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND MIGRANT

The Italian National Focal Point (NFP) was born in 1997 playing on the European scenario until the end of 2007. From the beginning of the year 2008, the Italian Network will continue its commitment only nationally, as the "*AIDS & Mobility*" Project is waiting for a new definition and a different group of European coordination. The Italian NFP is a group of experts coming from Public Institutions, Non-Governmental and Volunteer Organizations Representatives of immigrant communities of different Italian regions with the aim of studying the phenomenon of migrant flows associated with the health needs of foreign populations.

Among the various target proposed in the "*AIDS & Mobility*" Project, the Italian group has placed priority attention to migrant populations. This choice was prompted by the need to reflect on the relationship between migration and disease, the necessity to strengthen both promotion interventions and health protection in a multi-ethnic scenario; therefore, any step should have been directed to the recognition and promotion of a cultural diversity upon which the individual both Italian and foreign health, disease and care is based upon.

In the last fourteen years, this permanent working group, coordinated by Anna Maria Luzi of Head of Psycho-Socio-Behavioral Research, Communication, Training Unit of the Department of Infectious, Parasitic and Immune-mediated Diseases of *National Institute of Health in Italy*, has been working together with professionals whose specific members knowledge has enabled the Italian NFP to propose, on both national and international level, some epidemiological researches and projects on the field of HIV/AIDS prevention. Particular attention has been paid to migrating populations while precious training courses for psycho-social and health operators have been organized with special regard to transcultural approaches.

In the last three years the Italian NFP has expanded its field of interest to the Sexually Transmitted Infections and Tuberculosis.

The Italian NFP was also involved in a research project, sponsored and financed by the Ministry of Health, organized into six operating units and two sub-units, aimed at providing interpretations tools in order to both guide and support policies and interventions able to promote and protect the health of individuals, families and foreign communities.

To this aim, a relevant consideration has been given to Communicative-relational issues between foreigner people and health operators. In particular, within this and other projects, an operational model based on specific procedures for the creation of effective professional relationship has been developed.



RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

To provide effective and appropriate responses to the health needs of people from different socio-cultural backgrounds it has been necessary to have different preventive intervention methods, together with diagnosis and treatment developed by those services to which foreigners usually have access to; analyzing the socio-anagraphic and behavioural characteristics of specific targets such as foreign persons with HIV infection and foreign students, has been also important. Special attention was paid to communication and relational processes in the diagnosis and care of migrants suffering - directly or indirectly – from infectious diseases such as HIV, Human Papillomavirus and Tuberculosis.

Italian NFP projects are shown below.

Projects in progress:

- *“Evaluation of a communicative-relational Operational Model efficacy for HIV prevention in the migrant population living in some Italian Region.* The general objective of this study is to evaluate the efficacy of the communicative-relational Operational Model in different Italian Regions for implementing interventions aimed at adequately standardizing prevention targeted to migrants, facilitating the access to HIV testing and care. The Project, promoted and funded by the Ministry of Health, is coordinated by the *Istituto Superiore di Sanità* (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Anna Maria Luzi).
- *“Feasibility research of Surveillance II Generation System for preventing HIV infections in Surveillance II Generation System to prevent HIV in exposed groups”.* To experiment the feasibility of Surveillance II Generation System to prevent HIV. To observe HIV risky behaviour in some specific target populations (migrants and young people) following UNGASS indicators. To compare risky determiners in those groups for systematizing a new toolkit of risky indicators. To define targeted interventions for preventing HIV and STDs based on the new kit of indicators. The Project promoted and funded by the Ministry of Health is coordinated by the *Istituto Superiore di Sanità* (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Anna Maria Luzi).

Collaboration on European Projects:

- *“aMASE: advancing Migrant Access to health Services in Europe”*
The goal of the project is to understand what usually prevents migrants from turning to the health prevention centers, or centers for STDs - HIV diagnosis and cure, in this way the main goal is to improve the migrant health care services of the hosting countries. The European Project is coordinated by University College London (UK) and Instituto de Salud Carlos III Centro Nacional de Epidemiologia (ES).
- *“Meeting the health literacy needs of immigrant populations MEET”.* Lifelong Learning Programme: Leonardo Da Vinci Grundtvig and Dissemination – Call for proposal 2013 (EAC/S07/12). Educational, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, Unit P3. European project. Global Aim of the Project is the reduction of inequalities in the access to Health and Social Services and promotion of cognitive, and emotional resources, including healthy life styles, in migrants groups through the involvement of professional Health Educators. (Scientific Responsible Oxafam Italia, Arezzo, Participant for *Istituto Superiore di Sanità*, Dott.ssa Barbara Ensoli, Stefania D’Amato)

Performed Projects:

- *"Evaluation of effectiveness of communicative-relational model for HIV prevention in migrant population within regional Italian areas."* Aim of the project is to evaluate the feasibility of the *communicative-relational operational model* in different Italian Regions for homogeneous prevention interventions targeted to enable migrant persons to adequately access Health Services dealing with HIV prevention and care. The Project promoted and funded by the Ministry of Health is coordinated by the *Istituto Superiore di Sanità* (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Anna Maria Luzi).
- *"Application of the Operational Model to promote prevention interventions for HIV infection and tuberculosis in migrants."* Application of the Operational Model for communication of diagnosis and the management of a migrant person in order to facilitate interventions to prevent HIV infection and tuberculosis. The project is currently conducted in 4 health structures of Lazio Region (Rome and Latina). The project is sponsored and funded by the Ministry of Health with the scientific coordination of the *Istituto Superiore di Sanità* (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Anna Maria Luzi).
- *"Health promotion and protection of foreign-born person through the identification, testing and evaluation of health courses in infectious diseases"*.
The project aims to identify, test and promote those methodologies of intervention directed at foreign persons with health problems related to infectious diseases. The project was sponsored and funded by the Ministry of Health, with the scientific coordination of the *Istituto Superiore di Sanità* (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Anna Maria Luzi).
- *"Migration and Health"*. The aim of the project is describing the health state of the specific target and foreign population providing an overview of national legislation and regional policies. The best health care interventions, with particular attention to services usability will be identified as well as the best health training courses. The Project, promoted and funded by the Ministry of Health, is coordinated by the *Istituto Superiore di Sanità* (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Anna Maria Luzi).
- *"Evaluation of an HIV/AIDS counselling aimed at foreign citizens"*. The aim of the project is to identify the indicators of an HIV/AIDS counselling in effective relationship between operator and foreign person in order to standardize the intervention itself. This can be made through an integrated collaboration of three regional ANLAIDS offices of Northern, Center and Southern Italy. The Project promoted and funded by the Ministry of Health is coordinated by the *Istituto Superiore di Sanità* (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Anna Maria Luzi).
- *"Immigrants and HIV Prevention: a study on the evaluation of a campaign leaflet prepared by the Ministry of Health with the collaboration of National Focal Point Aids & Mobility"*. The Project Objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the leaflets produced under the VIIIth Educational-Informational Campaign for the Fight against AIDS promoted by the Ministry of Health for foreign population.
The project has been promoted and funded by the VI AIDS/*Istituto Superiore di Sanità* National Research Program (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Pietro Gallo).
- *"Italian and non-Italian students and HIV/AIDS infection: a psycho-socio-behavioural survey in high schools and colleges"*. The aim of the project is to describe - in relation to HIV infection - the cognitive, emotional and behavioural components of a sample of Italian and foreign students attending secondary schools located in different metropolitan areas of Northern (Brescia), Center (Rome) and Southern Italy (Palermo). The project has been promoted and funded by the VI AIDS/*Istituto Superiore di Sanità* National Research Program (Scientific Coordinator: Prof. Vincenzo Vullo).
- *"National multicenter prospective study of prevalence evaluation, incidence, risk factors and undertype HIV definition in Migrants and antibody greed analysis"* (Pr.ISHMA project). The

aim of the Project is to describe the epidemiological and virological profile of HIV infection in a population of semi-open - predominantly illegal - immigrants belonging to territorial top-level clinical centers or second-level hospitals and having experience both in the field of National Migration Medicine and in the management of HIV infection. The project has been promoted and funded by the VI AIDS/Istituto Superiore di Sanità National Research Program (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Issa El Hamad).

- *"Development of prevention programs aimed at identifying the health needs of foreign citizens regarding HIV/AIDS infection through the involvement of Italian National Focal Point"* (IInd year). The aim of the project is to identify the socio-demographic, cultural and behavioural characteristics of foreign people infected with HIV who have access to clinical centres in the southern, central and northern Italy. The project has been promoted and funded by the VI AIDS/Istituto Superiore di Sanità National Research Program (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Anna Maria Luzi).
- *"Development of prevention programs aimed at identifying the health needs of foreign citizens concerning HIV/AIDS infection through the involvement of Italian National Focal Point"*. The survey, conducted in five clinical centers of Brescia, Rome and Palermo has led to both the knowledge and analysis of HIV infected foreigners health needs, access to diagnosis and treatment services, behavioural problems, treatment adherence and knowledge of different modes of infection. The project has been promoted and funded by the V AIDS/Istituto Superiore di Sanità National Research Program (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Anna Maria Luzi).
- *Creation of a national net between those psycho-social and health structures granting aid to migrating populations with problems concerning HIV/AIDS/MST infection"*, financed by the 4th Social AIDS Research Plan. This investigation has allowed to map the governative and non-governative structures responsible for migrating populations in Italy, comparing the various experiences played by the different structures (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Nicola Petrosillo).
- *"The Arianna Project"*, financed by the 4th Social AIDS Research Plan, aims at creating a multicentric training net for linguistic and cultural mediators; the information will be precious for preventing the HIV/MST infections and improving immigrants access to psycho-social and health services: as a result, clandestine and irregular foreigners as well as drug-addicted people or prostitutes will not risk being excluded from these vital services anymore. The project has allowed the professional and highly skilled training of multiprofessional equipes engaged in granting aid to the growing immigrant population (Scientific Coordinator: Dr Aldo Morrone).
- *"Creation of a Net Among The NFP Of The Countries Of Mediterranean area"*, financed by the European Commission. The research, developed in partnership with Greece, Portugal and Spain, has allowed to map the psycho-social and health structures that, in these countries, answer the health needs of foreign citizens, creating the basis for the constitution of a net between Mediterranean countries NFP (Scientific Coordinator Prof. Giovanni Rezza).



PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

Italian National Focal Point has also played an important part in the 8th Informative and Educative Campaign (2007) promoted by the Ministry of Health and specifically addressed to foreign citizens. Actually, such cooperation has allowed to elaborate a leaflet (content, language, graphic design) for the foreign population in Italy.

The leaflet has been translated into seven languages (English, French, Spanish, Romanian, Russian, Chinese and Arabic) by cultural and linguistic mediators working in the Italian NFP organizations.

The NFP has also played an important role in the distribution of information materials prepared, as the individual components of the network have been offering (in their territory) the leaflet to foreign person themselves.

During the period 2006-2011, 250.000 leaflets were distributed to target foreigners, that is more than half of the material prepared by the Ministry of Health. This kind of generalized information was supplemented by information provided through telephone counselling personal intervention. Indeed, in the years 2006-2008, thanks to fundings of the Ministry of Health the "*Telefono Verde AIDS of the Ricerca psico-socio-comportamentale, Comunicazione e Formazione*"

Unit, was activated for the HIV infection prevention in foreign population. A team of counselors and cultural-linguistic mediators was created with the aim of working from Monday to Friday from 13.00 hours to 18.00 answering in the same eight languages used for the brochures addressed to foreign people. It was therefore possible to provide both a scientific and individual service to those people who do not speak Italian.

Actually HIV/AIDS/IST counselling activity to foreigner persons is performed by trained personnel in Italian and other languages (English, French, Portuguese). Further, as publicized in specific informative brochures, a legal consultancy service is available since February 2012 *at Telefono Verde AIDS-IST*.

Following a consolidated field experience, the specific guide "*Access of foreigner person to health care: operational indications*", reporting specific laws and regulations dealing with health rights of migrant persons, has been prepared by NFP legal consultants and published in 2013. The initiative for the drawing up of this work was provided by the conclusion of the State-Regions Agreement (year 2013), which was intended to ensure, for the first time in the context of an agreement between the State and the local institutions, equal treatment across the whole national territory for all citizens and foreign people, from both viewpoints of healthcare and access to care for the most vulnerable subjects.



TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The studies led by the Italian NFP have highlighted the necessity of focusing greater attention on formative interventions aiming to the creation of an integrated multiprofessional approach; updating the technical and scientific knowledge of the operators. Some training activity experts - members of the Italian NFP - have therefore elaborated a new didactic methodology for the realization of formative ways turned to operators engaged in a multiethnic context. Such a methodological approach is based on the principles and criterions of the andragogic model (Malcom Knowles) whose most important feature of the formative intervention is the operator experience as a person but also as a professional figure, a real learning subject within the whole process of relation with others. Professional updating courses of 30/40 hours each have been therefore promoted and customised for multidisciplinary equipes (medics, biologists, psychologists, cultural mediators, social assistants and nursing) coming from different Italian regions and working in both public and non-governative structures where foreign people access to. The teaching interactive method has integrated practice with theory, workshops, educational role-play training and plenary discussions. Here are the intramural courses activated in the past years which developed issues concerning scientific, technical and communicative-relational aspects to protect the foreign people's health:

Health and Migration: the communication in the prevention and diagnosis of Sexually Transmitted infections (17 September 2012)

The health of immigrants: communicating the diagnosis and care of infectious diseases (3rd edition: 11 - 12 February 2010)

The health of immigrants: communicating the diagnosis and care of infectious diseases (2nd edition: 26 to 28 January 2010)

The health of immigrants: communicating the diagnosis and care in infectious diseases (1st edition: 11 - 13 November 2009)

Good practice guidances for the development of health issues within non-Italian families (18 - 20 November 2008)

Foreign person health promotion aimed at training intercultural psycho-social and health operators (12 - 14 November 2007)

"Prevention of Infectious Diseases of Young Migrant People" (14 - 16 November 2006)

Transcultural approach to protect migrant health. Training course for psycho-social and health operators involved in HIV/AIDS management (2nd edition: 25 - 29 October 2004)

Transcultural approach to protect migrant health. Training course for psycho-social and health operators involved in HIV/AIDS management (1st edition: 6 - 10 October 2003)

Advanced Training course for psycho-social and health operators needing an integrated multi-professional approach to protect the health of the migrant (7 - 11 October 2002).

Every year, moderators, Italian and foreign experts take part in the National Meeting organised in the Istituto Superiore di Sanità by the Italian NFP; a report is written and addressed to the European Commission with the aim of providing a portrait of migratory flux in our country gathering precious information for the creation of both local and national health policies.

In the last years, these events have specifically focused on defined features within Migrant Persons Health Needs:

December 1997 – First National Conference of Italian National Focal Point – European Project “AIDS & Mobility”

9 May 2001 - Creation of a network within National Focal Point of Mediterranean Countries

15 May 2003 - Access to psycho-social health services: transcultural relationships.

17 November 2004 – HIV infection and AIDS in migrant people: necessary psycho-social health interventions.

8 November 2005 – Development of prevention programs targeted to the evaluation of health needs of foreigner persons related to HIV/AIDS, through the involvement of Italian National Focal Point.

21 September 2006 – Annual Meeting of Italian National Focal Point: state of art on Network Activities.

29 January 2008 – Migration and Health: 10 years of Italian National Focal Point, Infectious Diseases and Migrant activity.

4 June 2009 - Health and Transcultural. Scientific and Operational Contribute of Italian National Focal Point.

16 April 2010 – Proposal of Operational Model for the communication in diagnosis and care of foreigner persons affected by infectious diseases.

19 May 2011 - Tuberculosis, HIV and migration: a real emergency?

16 February 2012 – Mental Health, life styles and infectious diseases in migrant people.

In 2013 the Conference “Vaccine coverage in migrant and marginal people” has been held in Italian National Health Institute, specifically focusing on vaccination coverage in migrant and marginal populations to the aim of developing, through a broad discussion involving both scientific and socio-cultural issues, the communicative-relational intercultural tools necessary for an adequate setting of interventions for the control of preventable diseases.



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