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Reducing health inequalities through health promotion interventions

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Background and Aim: Madrid City Council has a network of Health Promotion (HP) Centers following the local “Healthy People Strategy” which includes a Health Inequalities (HI) Program.

Working with vulnerable groups requires the creation of professional synergies between health and social professionals. This collaborative approach contributes to the reduction of HI through community engagement and socio-culturally adapted interventions.

The aim of the proposed research is to describe how we work to reach vulnerable populations and engage them in health promotion activities.

Method: Our approach in HP is community participation through proportional universalism. We established alliances with social organizations and movements to provide joint initiatives at central and territorial level.

Intercultural mediators and social educators are key to reach these populations and to adapt materials to become meaningful to audiences.

In the interventions designed, we address health experiences, beliefs, and attitudes related to main themes with a social determinants approach.

Results: We have alliances and agreements with entities such as Social Services, equality agents and other municipal services.

In 2014, we have implemented 139 community projects related to the HI Program, 289 community activities, with a total of 18441 participants, 114 group-based interventions adapted to people with mental disorders or intellectual disabilities with 1472 participants, mostly in relation to sexual health, food, nutrition and physical activity.

Continued work has enforced a constructive relationship with associations and vulnerable population. Recipients now volunteer in other community activities and contact with other groups locally.

Participants report increased self-esteem and being able to think in a different way about their lifestyle, making healthier choices, and leading changes in their families as health promotion agents.

Conclusions: HP centers are a close and accessible health resource for vulnerable population, working towards social integration in addition to raising individual and community levels of health literacy.