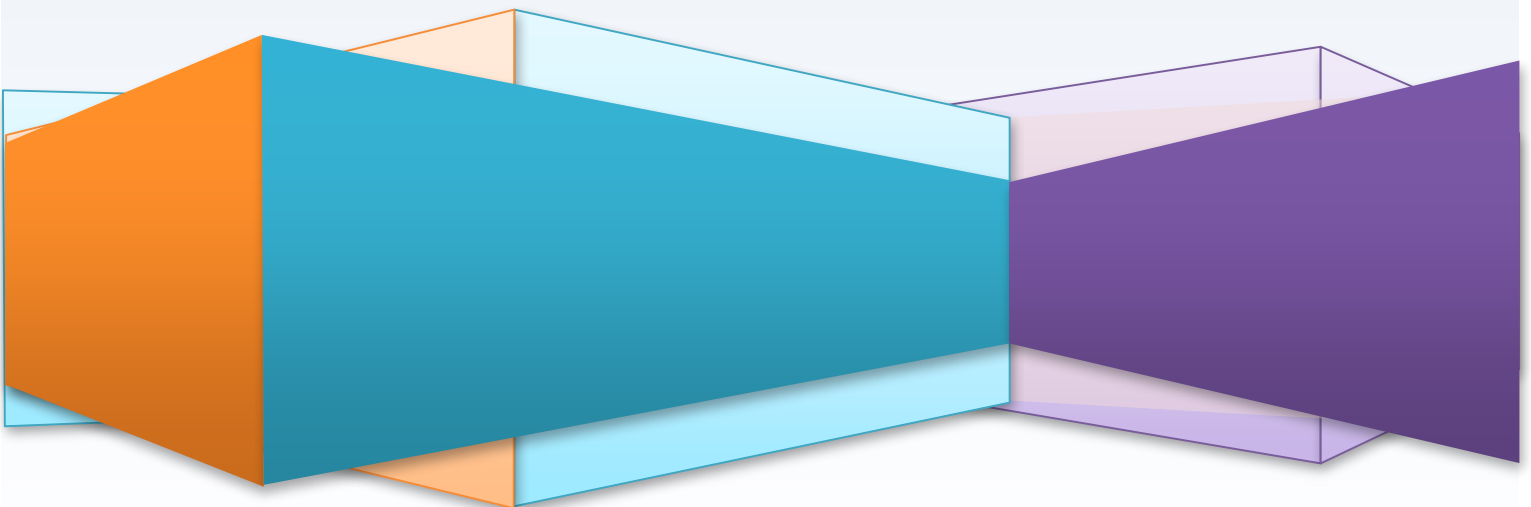


INTERORGANIZATIONAL NETWORK “Social Partners for Health Without Discrimination ”

Results and recommendations

July - December 2013



I. ARGUMENT

The right to health is one of the fundamental human rights, ensuring equal access to health care for all people is one of the most important components of all the provisions of international law. In the European Union to guarantee non-discrimination principle plays a fundamental role. Fighting discrimination can not be won only through legislation, it depends primarily on changing attitudes and behavior and the awareness that discrimination is itself a special form of affront to human dignity¹.

The overall picture of Health in Romania in 2013 indicates the existence of significant differences in terms of access to healthcare of Roma than the majority population. Inequality in this regard, combined with poor living conditions and other obstacles, is a severe disadvantage for Roma that does not enjoys the highest attainable standard of health.

In Romania the Roma are a vulnerable population, the population groups access to health care is hampered by multiple barriers. They can be created by cultural differences between Roma and the majority population or fear of any discriminatory attitudes of health professionals. Another type of obstacle is the socioeconomic characteristics of the population, lack of medical insurance status or the precariousness of financial resources which limits the purchase of medicines and use of specialized health care services. All these disadvantages restrict access to health care, affecting the quality of care and their general state of health.

Roma live on average 16 years less, are more susceptible to serious medical conditions and are less likely to have access to medical care or can afford medicines compared with the general population of Romania². The health system includes latent discrimination factors against Roma. They can be identified both the eligibility conditions level and the relationship between patient and medical staff³. In a survey by the Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009, medical staff discrimination was highlighted as a particular problem for Roma.

According to the study "Health and Non-Discrimination"⁴ medical students recognize the existence of the phenomenon of discrimination in health care and believes that it affects access to health care for vulnerable groups. The report shows that students still lack the values of tolerance and acceptance of diversity. Therefore, a systematic approach is needed in higher education, especially for those who will become doctors, which would provide information and knowledge about the importance of equal opportunities and non - discrimination.

Educational role of health professionals on professional ethics and non-discrimination of vulnerable groups in the health system is an essential component in ensuring the right to health protection , particularly by bending on the mission of care centered on vulnerable patient relationship, the right to health of its .

¹ The prohibition of discrimination in the European Union and the relevance of this principle in the medical profession,

² European Roma Rights Centre, Inequalities in health and disaggregated data, 2013

³ Presidential Commission for the Analysis of Social and Demographic Risk Report Risks and social inequities in Romania,

⁴ Association for Development and Social Inclusion, Health and nondiscrimination research report 2011

II. GENERAL CONTEXT

Since 2010, the Association for Development and Social Inclusion initiated and conducted an extensive advocacy campaign for creating, introducing and teaching in the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Romania of a university course that covers issues related to medical ethics in relation to non-discrimination against Roma patients. In 2010, together with UMF "Gr T. Popa "Iași, ADIS has elaborated university course "Ethics and non-discrimination of vulnerable groups in the health system. "It was later introduced into the curricula of five universities and colleges of Medicine in Romania: UMF "Gr T. Popa "University of Medicine and Pharmacy Targu Mures, UMF" Iuliu Hațieganu "Cluj Napoca, UMF" Carol Davila Bucharest "Faculty of Medicine" Victor Papilian "in Sibiu.

Unique national initiative is twofold: (1) prevent discriminatory attitudes and behavior towards patients belonging to vulnerable groups and (2) improving access to quality health services for vulnerable groups, focusing on Roma. These objectives are achieved by increasing knowledge, understanding, acceptance and respect of future health professionals for national and ethnic minorities.

The course focuses on the Roma minority. It provides an introduction to medical ethics and medical students increase their knowledge on the issue of discrimination and Roma minority in order to promote a tolerant and open attitude to the medical professionals towards vulnerable groups, particularly towards Roma.

Unique in Romania, the course is taught for a semester as an optional course as follows:

- ❖ 2011-2012 academic year at one university, the UMF Iasi
- ❖ 2012-2013 academic year - at three universities, namely the UMF Iasi, Cluj and UMF Targu Mures
- ❖ 2013-2014 academic year - 5 Universities and Faculties of medicine, UMF Iasi (Specialization Medicine , English and Romanian series), UMF Cluj Napoca (Specialization Medicine and Nursing), UMF Targu Mures (Program of Study nutrition and Dietetics and Medicine), University Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest and Sibiu

The course became popular within universities due to the strategic use of interactive teaching methods and commitment, as well as stories and personal examples of lecturers from outside the university and the increasing number of students enrolled each academic year. Up to now, 250 students were equipped with relevant knowledge and experience to prevent discrimination against vulnerable groups, in particular Roma, in the health system.

In a written recommendation presented to the Senate of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Iasi, Cluj Napoca and Targu Mures by the the students who took part at the course they recommend the transformation of the course in a compulsory one emphasizing the importance of the course in their training.

To unite the efforts of all partners involved in the program ADIS constituted the interorganizational network "Social Partners for health without discrimination" which proposes an integrated and complementary approach to promote the adoption of the university course at a public policy level.

The network is constituted within the project "Social Partners for Health without discrimination" implemented by the Association for Development and Social Inclusion in the period July-December 2013 with financial support from the Civic Innovation Fund, a program funded by the Trust for Civil Society in Central

and Eastern Europe sponsored by Raiffeisen Bank, administered by the Foundation for Civil Society Development.

III. RESULTS

The project "Social Partners for Health without discrimination" answers the need for restructuring and improving the education and training system to develop human resources in medicine, falling within the European strategy also in the Integrated Guidelines.

The activity of interorganizational network also supports additional the feature of social responsibility in Romanian medical education, social involvement also competent development of physician-patient communication.

During the six months of the project these were the following achievements:

➤ 11 members of interorganizational network "Social Partners for Health without discrimination".
The aim is to strengthen participation in the formulation process of public policies in health of the social partners (NGOs and UMF) by promoting education for non discrimination in the medical education in Romania.

The network has in its structure the following members

1. Association for Development and Social Inclusion – ADIS
2. University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Gr T. Popa "
3. University of Medicine and Pharmacy Targu Mures
4. Association of Resident Doctors
5. University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Iuliu Hațieganu" Cluj Napoca
6. University "Lucian Blaga" in Sibiu
7. University of Medicine and Farmcacie "Carol Davila" Bucharest
8. National Council for Combating Discrimination
9. Transparency International
10. Center for Health Policies and Services
11. Medical Students Organization of Cluj

In the composition of the network can enter the social partners involved in the implementation of policies and activities to reduce inequalities in health system nationally representative regional, county and local, based in Romania:

- local and national public authorities
- education establishments and continue professional training
- Non-governmental Organizations
- Social partners: unions, employers
- Research Institutes.

- 322 beneficiaries of 5 multiplier activities organized under the aegis of interorganizational network "Social Partners for Health without discrimination" to promote non-discrimination in health at local level.

1. October 26, 2013, Iasi - Workshop 1 "Social Partners for Health without discrimination".

The event was organized by the Association for Development and Social Inclusion in partnership with the University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Gr T. Popa "in the context of the IXth National Conference on Bioethics, from Iasi, Hotel Unirea.

The theme of the workshop proposed a scientific forum for discussion regarding the promotion at public policy level of the national education initiative to non discrimination in Universities and Faculties of Medicine in Romania.

During the workshop the dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy "Gr T. Popa" **emphasized the forming-educational and social role of medicine universities and socio-humanistic approach** in which they are engaged, explaining that *"the mission of the medical school is to shape the personality and understanding especially the younger generation. Besides the volume of scientific information which is absolutely necessary the education needed this message to be dedicated entirely to the will and conviction towards society"*. According to Professor Azoicăi *"the project completes the idea of social mission in the faculties of medicine and I am glad that this project is not running as a desideratum, but it has been applied to several universities. The current trend is for us to get more involved in the social life of the community they serve and the vision ADIS entering a binding strategy for the Faculty of Medicine of Iași "*.



2. November 25 2013, Bucharest , Workshop 2 „Social Partners for Health without Discrimination”.



The event was organized by the Association for Development and Social Inclusion in partnership with Transparency International Romania.

The Executive Director of Residents Doctors Association, declared that **„the project is unique at national and at european level** , being a successful initiative, of which the university lecturers are very pleased, because the course is necessary and useful ”

The National Council for Combating Discrimination, salutes ADIS’s initiative because on the pending court of the institution are many cases that have as main subject discrimination of the persons belonging to vulnerable groups, in health system. **„ It is important for the students, future professionals in medical domain, to have this kind of knowledge, at least general level, regarding the theme of this course”** . Also, was mentioned the importance of knowing and learning the legislation in force regarding the sanctioning forms of discrimination, by the students and by the medical staff too.

3. November 27 2013, Sibiu – Workshop 3 „Social Partners for Health without Discrimination”.



The event took place within the University ”Lucian Blaga” in Sibiu and was organized by the Association for Development and Social Inclusion, in partnership with Faculty of Medicine ”Victor Papilian” in Sibiu.

The workshop has enjoyed impressive participation both students and medical staff within ULBS bringing on the public agenda of the university the concept of social responsibility of the doctor in the relationship with the patient. According to the Dean of Faculty of Medicine **the relationship doctor-patient need to overcome the barrier of the ”white coat” and the professionals in health care has to put an accent on the social effects of their own behavior regarding the patients.** In the Dean’s opinion this aspect makes the promotion of ethics course and nondiscrimination in medical education must be real and actual training of future health professionals.

4. December 12 2013, Tîrgu Mures – Workshop 4 „Social Partners for Health without Discrimination”.

The event was organized in the context of Days of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy Targu Mures 2013 edition by the UMF Targu Mures in partnership with the Association for Development and Social Inclusion.

The workshop emphasized the importance of education for non-discrimination in higher medical education in Romania, a concept promoted by interorganizational network ”Social Partners for Health without discrimination”.



Testimonies reveal that students graduating from the course **topics such as patient rights and obligations of health professionals are hardly addressed and known in medical education**, which is one of the reasons why they recommend the promotion of joint initiative truncated university medical curricula.

5. December 16 2013, București –Promotion event „Social Partners for Health without Discrimination”



The event was organized by the Association for Development and Social Inclusion in partnership with the Resident Physician Association within the National Institute of Legal Medicine ”Mina Minovici”. The workshop was attended by a great number of students from the University of Medicine and Pharmacy ”Carol Davila” - Bucharest which brought attention to the concept of social responsibility of the doctor patient relationship.

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In the workshop it was also presented the opportunity to attend optional course "Ethics and Non-discrimination of vulnerable groups in the health system" from semester II of the academic year 2013-2014.

IV CONCLUZIONI AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Association for the Development and Inclusion's model of a strong partnership built on assumptions of human resource development in the Romanian health system and orientated towards reducing inequalities, is the first initiative of its kind, developed and implemented by an NGO in Romania.

During 2010 - 2013 it has been shown that the course is necessary in medical higher education, being appreciated and recommended by both the academic staff and students and the institutions of central government and non-governmental organizations with competences in this area of health. According to the concept of social mission, approached by Faculty of Medicine, universities should equip the graduates with the knowledge not only of medical ethics, ethical and legal, but also information about the tradition and culture of other ethnic groups and vulnerable which is the first step toward understanding and tolerance.

Based on these aspects **the Technical Secretariat and members of the Social Partners Health without discrimination Network recommends to the national authorities the following:**

- ✓ Promotion of education for non-discrimination of vulnerable groups in medical profile schools, universities and post university trainings by introducing and teaching a course for combating discrimination against vulnerable groups/Roma people in health system
- ✓ Organizing continuous professional training of health professionals in the field of non-discrimination of Roma in the access to health care and their accreditation by the competent bodies in the field.
- ✓ Introducing in the national curriculum in of the medical residency training the subject of ethics and nondiscrimination of vulnerable groups in health system.

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