
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

A community health literacy Hub

23rd International Conference on Integrated Care, Antwerp, Flanders, 22-24 May 2023

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Introduction: Being health literate is important to get sufficient health information, to navigate the health system, to access appropriate care and to be able to self-manage health. As such it is a key determinant of health. There is a need for innovative measures to improve health literacy among people living in socioeconomically vulnerable circumstances. In response to this need, a low threshold community health literacy hub was developed and implemented in a vulnerable neighbourhood in the city of Antwerp, within a broader project on the prevention of cardiovascular diseases (H2020 SPICES project)

The health kiosk provides information on a healthy lifestyle and disease prevention in a low-threshold manner to people and groups in a socially vulnerable situation. These are the people for whom the current preventive offer is insufficiently accessible; because it is not sufficiently attuned to diversity in language and culture, it is insufficiently accessible or available, or because people have so many other concerns on their minds that they have less mental space to actively engage with health.

Who is involved? The Health Kiosk is a partnership between Logo Antwerp, University of Antwerp, Antwerp District. Another important collaboration is with the Community Health Workers. These are people from the communities involved who direct people, often non-native speakers, to care. They speak to people in their own language, thus removing an important barrier. This cooperation also allows us to make good links between the preventive offer and primary care. To further operationalise the operation of the kiosk, ELZ Oost will also be involved. The focus will also be on first-line professionals.

Results: The health kiosk grew out of the need to increase health literacy among vulnerable target groups, those who live under the radar. Yet the effect of the kiosk appears to go much further. The whole community gets involved: not just residents, but also organisations from different sectors, as well as the working population. Over the past year, the kiosk has become well embedded in the neighbourhood. A broad base of support has been created.

Outreach work presupposes a lifeworld perspective. You can only succeed if you really connect with the living environment of local residents. Participative work is therefore indispensable when doing outreach work. It is crucial to involve people from the community right from the start of the project.

Next steps: Now we need to take a step further. Looking to the future, it is important to link up even more with first-line professionals such as GPs, pharmacists, home nursing, etc. The pressure on first-line professionals, especially GPs, is high.