

Risk factors, awareness of disease and use of medications in a deprived population: differences between indigent natives and undocumented migrants in Italy.

G. Fiorini, C. Cerri, F. Magri, L. Chiovato, L. Croce, A. E. Rigamonti, A. Sartorio, S. G. Cella

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Background: undocumented migrants experience many health problems; a comparison with a suitable control group of natives living in the same socio-economic conditions is still lacking.

Methods: demographic data and data on risk factors, chronic conditions and dietary habits were obtained for 6933 adults (2950 Italians and 3983 undocumented migrants) receiving medical assistance from 40 non-governmental organizations all over the country.

Results: attributed to the fact that these were unselected groups, differences were found in their demographic features, the main ones being their marital status (singles: 50.5% among Italians and 42.8% among migrants; $P < 0.001$). Smokers were more frequent among Italians (45.3% versus 42.7% $P = 0.03$); the same happened with hypertension (40.5% versus 34.5% $P < 0.001$). Migrants were more often overweight (44.1% versus 40.5% $P < 0.001$) and reporting a chronic condition (20.2% versus 14.4% $P < 0.001$). Among those on medications ($n = 1354$), Italians were fewer ($n = 425$) and on different medications. Differences emerged also in dietary habits.

Conclusions: differences in health conditions exist between native-borns and undocumented migrants, not because of a bias related to socio-economic conditions. Further studies are needed to design sustainable health policies and tailored prevention plans.

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