



“MiMi Programme: With Migrants for Migrants” – Intercultural Health ©

The programme “With Migrants for Migrants – Intercultural Health in Germany” (MiMi) recruits, trains and supports intercultural mediators to teach the German health system and related health topics to their migrant communities.

Developed by the Ethno-Medical Centre, the programme was launched in 2003 in cooperation with BKK Bundesverband (Federal Association of Company Health Insurance Funds) as a pilot in four cities of the federal states of Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia. It has expanded to 51 cities in Lower Saxony, Hessen, North-Rhine-Westphalia, Brandenburg, Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Hamburg, Bremen and Schleswig-Holstein.

The MiMi programme involves two groups of people with immigrant backgrounds:

- socially integrated immigrants (aged 20-60) legally living in Germany, who are trained as intercultural mediators;
- immigrant populations (mostly with lower level of social integration), who participate in community group sessions led by intercultural mediators.

The majority of intercultural mediators are women. MiMi aims to render the health system more accessible to immigrants, increase health literacy among them as well as empower them. The programme uses an assets approach to health promotion. It sees migrants as experts in their own cause who have often developed positive coping strategies and resources from their personal histories, of which ideal use could be made.

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The MiMi programme uses five key mechanisms:

Intercultural health mediators: The programme trains and certifies multilingual intercultural health mediators through a 50-hour course. Locally recruited, they plan and conduct the following information events themselves. This aspect of the programme improves access to immigrant communities and ensures sustainability (e.g., some mediators voluntarily continue their work after the programme has ended).

Community group sessions: MiMi provides opportunities for sharing information with migrant communities in their own language and in culturally sensitive way through group sessions held in easy-to-reach locations (settings frequented by migrants). The topic “German health system” is compulsory, and participants are asked to choose a second topic from among the remaining 15 categories.

Health Guide: Available in 15 languages, the Health Guide is produced and regularly updated by the EMZ and (former) BKK Bundesverband in cooperation with 80 health-related organizations. It describes the German health system in an easily understandable way and gives information on targeted health topics. Health literacy and knowledge about the German health system’s institutions and prevention services are essential in increasing immigrants’ capacities to make use of available resources (e.g., regular use of early diagnosis medical check-ups).

Partnership, networking and public relations: Public relations are jointly conducted by the EMZ and (former) BKK Bundesverband through media content, the website (www.bkk-promig.de) and regular newsletters. Networking aims to sensitize health and social institutions to better meet the needs of immigrants. It includes annual programme review meetings to which policymakers, mediators and health and social workers are invited to exchange their experiences.

Monitoring and evaluation: The programme is monitored by a protocol that records the feedback of cooperation partners through programme conferences and routine contacts. Measurement of health attitude changes, analysis of objectives achieved and adjustments of ineffective modules.

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