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Migrations and Health: interrelations among immigrants in Catalonia



Nowadays, it is very common to associate immigration with illness; the relative novelty of immigration in Catalonia and the absence of specialized studies help to perpetuate this vision. The results of this dissertation, written by Pau Mota and winner of an award from the CTECS, contradict most of the previous studies, which link immigration to an increase in infectious diseases and to problems of mental health.

The relative new phenomenon of foreign immigration in Catalonia explains the growing research about the connection of health and immigration. Research mainly focuses on infectious diseases, mental health and cultural diversity. The objective of this research, that has taken place between April 2003 and December 2006 by the Migration's Research Group at the UAB, is to discuss the current relationship between immigration and health, both in Catalonia and international

contexts. To analyse the health patterns of foreign immigrants in Catalonia and to propose, if necessary, practical measures to improve the research and medical assistance of the foreign immigrant community. With this aim, we undertook an ecological study with population data (municipal registers) and clinical data (hospital discharges) for the year 2003. Data from the panel survey, Panel de Desigualtats (PaD), of the Fundació Jaume Bofill has also been used as well as a qualitative methodology to complete the analysis.

Among the results, one can observe trends that support the "healthy migrant" theory versus "sick migrants". The results match previous studies, even though the existing differences can be explained by the lack of data and population registries, and the biased nature of immigration and health publications.

The results indicate that if socio-economic variables are taken into account, such as life conditions of immigrants of all origins, the migration factor cannot support fully the determinants of health. There is the need to create a data collection system that will guarantee the creation of population studies about the relationship between disease and immigration. Better data collection would mean the improvement and development of medical assistance to foreign immigrants and their health.

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References

PhD dissertation "Migrations and Health: interrelations in the foreign immigration in Catalonia", presented by Pau Mota Moya and directed by Àngels Pascual de Sans i Josefina Caminal i Homar.

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