
**“Public Living Room – A Safe Learning Space”
Grundtvig Learning Partnership –
Warsaw, Poland, 20-23 November 2014**

**Themepaper on Topic 4
Healthcare System**

Evaluation of knowledge and experiences of maternal health services

During the mobility to Warsaw in November 2014 we compared the health care systems that exist in the partner countries of Turkey, Poland, Germany, Austria and Slovakia. As a network with groups from very different backgrounds, it was interesting to look at what exists in terms of ante- and post-natal health care and what is missing in different countries. The questions below suggest that we focused in our discussions on the experiences women in the partner countries have with the system, but also on what is missing.

Questions which were used to compare the healthcare systems

1. Were you/are you satisfied with your ante-natal healthcare? (on a scale from 1 to 5 - 1 is bad, 5 is excellent)
 - mothers are **moderately** satisfied with their ante-natal health care (Turkey)
 - average evaluation: 4.5 , however most women evaluated private health care (Poland)
 - 90% gave 4 and 5 (Slovakia)
 - average 4 and 5 (Germany, Mutterforum)
 - 74% gave 4 and 5 (Austria)

2. Did you take advantage of all the tests you were entitled to during your pregnancy?
 - Most of the mothers attending the discussions stated that they had all the necessary tests related to their pregnancy. (Turkey)
 - Most women used the tests they were entitled to. Some paid for extra tests. (Poland)
 - 87% yes (Austria)
 - 90% yes (Slovakia)
 - mostly yes (Germany)

3. Did the care you received during labour and shortly afterwards meet your expectations? What was missing? What surprised you?

- Mothers stated that in general they do not face any problems in Private Hospitals. On the other hand, in government hospitals they do not find the services satisfactory. They complained about the attitude and the behaviors of the health personnel. They think that health personnel should be more kind and concerned about the patients situation (Turkey)
- Most women evaluated state hospitals quite highly. Giving birth in private hospitals is rather unavailable for most Polish women. Some criticized lack of individual approach by doctors/midwives (Poland)
- Well organized delivery teams in hospitals. Things to improve: having the same staff during labour, more transparent information, more respect for mothers, family rooms where fathers can stay as well, providing clear explanation without intimidating mothers (Germany)
- Women who have private insurance get own midwife, a single room. Criticism: inhuman treatment by hospital staff, not enough staff, too little information about health status, breastfeeding and baby care, painful examinations (Slovakia)
- 53 % not satisfied, 40% satisfied. What was missing- willingness to help from staff, individual approach, breastfeeding advice, enough staff to provide support. What surprised you- nice facilities help from neonatal nurses who were ready to help. (Austria)

4. Did your post-natal care include a midwife, a breastfeeding advisor or other specialists like a psychologist or gynecologist? Did you require them or was it standard care? Were you satisfied with those services?

- Mothers stated that post-natal care including midwives, breastfeeding advisors or other specialists like a psychologist are usually given only in private hospitals. They added that the health centers only call for follow up of the child. However, most of the mothers are pleased with midwives or gynecologists and indicated that they received much support (Turkey)
- All women questioned received support from a midwife. Community midwives in Poland have to visit new mums 4-6 times after birth, however it does not always happen. Usually they visit women with some problems. Some women had breastfeeding counseling, but a private one. No one received help from a psychologist (Poland)
- Support from midwives is a standard in Germany, but the demand for them is higher than the supply. It is not always possible to get a quick appointment with a specialist (Germany)
- It depends on maternity hospital- state or private. Everything above standard care is paid. Breastfeeding advisor is only available when you ask for them. Mothers often

do not know what is standard care, what they are entitled to. Gynecologist is present only when needed. If you have private insurance you have specialists included. Otherwise, you have to request a midwife, breastfeeding advisor or other specialists (Slovakia)

5. What kind of care, in your opinion, was missing? What would you change in the mother and baby healthcare system?

- Shortcomings: Information
Hygiene
Courtesy and understanding

Mothers indicated that, during pregnancy, they would like to have health services from specialized doctors not from the midwives (Turkey)

- More empathy and understanding from staff, better access to information about available post-natal support, (Poland)
- A comprehensive approach to post-natal care is missing, different midwives have different opinions which is confusing ,ante-natal classes should be of the same quality, time management in hospitals is bad (Germany)
- Missing: breastfeeding advisor, psychological support, recovery gymnastics ,support at home after ambulant birth. consultancy , especially after birth in hospital, breastfeeding advice in hospital, services- how to care for the baby properly, psychiatric care for mothers who suffer from post-natal depression. What could be changed: more information and networking about ambulant birth, more expert staff, home visits by midwives, better support for premature babies and their parents (co-sleeping) – (Slovakia)

6. In your opinion, is the paediatric and specialist baby care sufficient in your country? What could be changed? What is missing?

- Mothers indicated that they do not know much about the pediatric and specialist baby care services in the country. They stated that this information is usually given in private hospitals; but they highlighted that they receive some of this information with the help of the trainings they received in the mother centers (Turkey)
- Most women have very poor opinion about pediatric care. They complained that it is hard to get an appointment with a specialist, and that doctors give contradictory advice (Poland)
- It is sufficient but could be improved, you have to take your own initiative and choose the right doctors (Slovakia)

Additional questions for discussion- answers from Turkey

1. How do I assure the health of my family, what control do I have, and what do I leave to professionals?

Mothers stated that the trainings offered at the mothers centers are very important for them. They think that they can assure the health of their families by giving importance to hygiene, routine health controls, and follow up of the vaccination table of their children. They believe that health personnel should be more supportive.

2. Do I believe in curative or preventive healthcare or both? How do I balance the two approaches?

Mothers believe that both approaches have vital importance for health care. They stated that it is easier to protect health than to cure illnesses. They highlighted the importance of early diagnosis and treatment which would ease and shorten the duration of the diseases.

3. Do my children get immunizations? Why or why not?

Approximately most of the mothers stated that they follow the vaccination schedule for their children for immunization and better health.

4. Do I always trust health staff and authorities and follow the medical advice they give?

Some of the mothers stated that they do not trust much to the health personnel because of their attitudes. On the other hand some of the mothers are satisfied with the service they receive and trust to their doctors and follow the medical advice given to them.

5. How do I approach the intimidating atmosphere of doctors and hospitals?

Mothers stated that they are ashamed of having operations like abortion, delivery or insertion of IUDs (intrauterine devices) and are scared of the procedures. They think that the health personnel specialized in these areas, should be more gentle and understanding.

Generally, the discussion which took place in Warsaw provided a general picture of what the pre- and post-natal care looks like in each country. There are some obvious differences connected with the economic situation of the country. Despite that, there seem to be common problems connected with the attitude of doctors, midwives and other specialists. Also, irrespective of the country, all mothers seem to have similar doubts and needs connected with pregnancy and caring for a new baby.

There were group discussions on what could be changed in the ante- and post-natal care and an attempt to look at the role of mother centers regarding this issue.

Discussion Outcomes about the Role of Mother Centers regarding the healthcare issue:

- Informative: providing relevant information concerning the available healthcare
- Breastfeeding and Psychological Support- Organizing meetings with specialists
- Running Support Groups for new mums
- Offering post-natal gymnastics classes