

Master Thesis

Health Seeking Behaviour of “Gypsy and Traveller” Women in South Finistère, France

**An assessment focusing on maternal health
prevention**



© Copyright Eric Roset

**Author :
Brigitte Evard**

**Tutor:
Bernadette Peterhans**

Swiss TPH, Basel
May 2010

Executive Summary

In France with its 60 million inhabitants about 400 000 people mostly of French citizenship are “Gypsies”, “Travellers”.

Only few studies have been conducted on the situation of Travellers and often with a small sample size. Moreover there are almost no data specific to maternal health of Traveller women.

Several governmental organizations and European Commission denounce the discrimination against Travellers and Roma migrants, in all Europe but also specifically in France, which may affect maternal health of Travellers.

This aim of the research is to assess what influences Traveller women’s decision to use or not the antenatal care services.

To do so, an exploratory study was conducted with a limited sample size by using qualitative methods from three different perspectives: the Travellers’, the health staff’s and the local authorities’.

The research assesses the part of the national antenatal care (ANC) program followed by female Travellers compared to the rest of the population and evaluates whether the ANC program is adapted to the situation of Travellers or not.

Access to health care doesn’t seem to be problematic but findings clearly show that the health promotion services are neglected by Travellers. This poor use can be explained partly by the cultural habit to transmit the knowledge within the community but also by the fact that the health promotion services seem not adapted to Travellers’ situation: information through written papers, information given in course outside the halting area,....

The poor access to maternal health promotion by Traveller women might have consequences on Traveller maternal and child health. However insufficient data and studies related to this topic didn’t allow to draw evidence-based conclusions. Further researches are needed.

The study shows that all the themes assessed - access, interrelation, quality of care- are permeated with cultural differences. The “clan” including the family and the relatives is an essential value for Travellers. It emerged that the health staff is not enough aware of the Travellers’ habits and customs. An understanding of the cultural differences from both sides might help to promote the use of the health promotion services by Travellers. The coordination of care and the way to get appointments also need to be addressed in order to improve the quality of antenatal care for pregnant Travellers.