

## CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

### Design and implementation of an empowering program for the gypsy population in the Basque country

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**An introduction:** The life expectancy of the general population in the Basque Country is around 80 years, while in the case of gypsy people it is below 60 years. A number of unhealthy eating habits and hygiene habits very common in the gypsy community are among the reasons for these marked differences. These have been some of the triggers for the Basque Government's Department of Health, Osakidetza and the Basque Gypsy community to work together in the development of an initiative that improves health education and contributes to the empowerment of the Gypsy community.

**Short description of practice change implemented:** The Active Patient Program (APP) is a self-care education program that contributes to raising the health status of chronic patients. During 2016, a working group with representatives of the APP and the gypsy associations has worked on adapting the course "Caring for my health" to the socio-cultural context of the Gypsy people, emerging in the "Caring for the health of the Gypsy people" new course.

One of the key points is that the workshops are facilitated by two trained leaders, both of whom are non-health professionals belonging to the gypsy community, so it is easier for the message to reach its objectives and increase attendees' motivation to improve their living habits.

**Aim and theory of change:** Health education and specifically the empowerment of patients and citizens through structured educational interventions have proven to be a very effective action in engaging people in the self-management of their own health conditions.

**Targeted population, stakeholders and timeline:** All the Gypsy associations of the Basque Country were invited to participate in the initiative. During November and December 2016, 24 gypsies, all of them very active members of Gypsy associations in the Basque Country, have been accredited as facilitators of the workshop "Caring for the health of the Gypsy people". There are 12 workshops scheduled for the first quarter of 2017, expected to be attended by around 150 gypsies.

**Highlights:** The training experience has been very positive for both the workshop trainers and the future facilitators.

**Lessons learned:** This new program is aimed at people of gypsy ethnicity who want to improve their general health status.

**Discussions:** Once the results have been evaluated in terms of acquired knowledge, perceived utility and overall satisfaction with the workshop, it will be assessed whether it is worthwhile to extend the program to other groups of gypsies and with what characteristics it should be done.

**Comments on sustainability and transferability:** In a first phase we plan to implement the program in the Basque Country and, if the experience is positive, it could be transferred to other Autonomous Communities of Spain.

**Conclusions:** They consider this methodology very useful for working with any kind of community, although some adaptations appeared as necessary for any particular cultural group. We show you a video made to show the program between them [https://youtu.be/H4ulZUXI\\_ZA](https://youtu.be/H4ulZUXI_ZA)

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**Keywords:** self-management; gypsies; chronic diseases; education

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