

Arbeitsgruppe:

Gesundheit

Anwesende: Veada Stoff (Koordinatorin der Arbeitsgruppe), Nomawethu Kelbitsch (OMEGA), Nicola Baloch (OMEGA), Eunice Balogun, Christine Anderwald (Marienambulanz), Brigitte Serubuga, Yamil Juevero, Magret Nwoha, Benedicta Nwoha, Myriam Fleury (Chiala Afriqas), Bose Egharevba, Tessy Williame, Christian Theiss (Kinder & Jugendanwalt), Sigrid Binder (Die Grünen), Edith Kerschenbauer (OMEGA), Tony Moses Adeneken, Mary Ndu, Jessica Feichtner, Thandi Stengg, Philomena Dike, Diana Nuhu, Rosemary Emiohe, Martina Iwuchukwu, Apolonia Anadi

Gäste: Dr. Zeck (LKH-Gebärklinik), Helmut Gilg (GKK), Christine Anderwald (Marienambulanz), Catherine McGeeney (Steirische Aids-Hilfe), Katherina Stadlober (Eltern-Kind Zentrum),

Integration afrikanischer Frauen in das Österreichische Gesundheitssystem

1.) Dr. Zeck (LKH-Gebärklinik)

Dr Zeck has experience working in African countries like Ghana, Tanzania etc. He mentioned that the Austrian health system is different from other countries like in Africa. The Austrian health practise referral system is arranged so that a pregnant woman should first consult a general practitioner and then be referred to a specialist (obstetrician) and not first go directly to a specialist or to the hospital. There are services like "Notarzt" and ambulances which should be used when need arises. Hospitals are used as secondary and tertiary services.

He recommended African women also to attend antenatal classes so as to learn more about breathing and relaxation techniques, various options concerning pain remedies e.g. epidurals and to view the environment of the delivery room before birth. Routine antenatal check-ups, tests, examinations are of utmost importance and recorded on the mother-child pass. Amongst the tests done at the clinic, HIV test with consent is one of them especially to people who are from high risk countries like Africa.

It is wise to bring a translator along, if German language is a problem for communication during consultation. There is a tendency of people bringing in the entire family to the hospital at the same time. Patients are allocated into the rooms according to their ethnic or language so that they can be able to communicate to each other.

African women behave differently in expressing pain than other women during labour. It might be very difficult for the doctors and midwives to know how to react when an African woman can not describe the pain due to language problems. The issue of discrimination was discussed but Dr. Zeck was not aware of such incidences in LKH-Gebärklinik. Some African women present mentioned that sometimes during admission, administrative personnel do pass disrespectful remarks. Some African women stated that they had tried to go to antenatal classes but the language barrier was a problem. . Dr. Zeck stated that he is very interested in the future to further discuss all issues that could relate to better communication and well-being in the LKH-Maternity Clinic for the staff and the African women patients.

We suggested perhaps translators could be provided. There should be more information in other languages besides German concerning these classes and it should be well distributed in the African community.

2.) Helmut Gigl (Gebietskrankenkasse)

GKK - State Health Insurance- that should be automatic when one works in Austria.

Every person must have health insurance. Either one pays him/herself or is insured with his/her partner, children with their parents until they begin to work themselves, or is mandatory when one is employed. Expensive medicines must be checked by the GKK-doctors and one can register to be exempt from the medicine charges at the pharmacy only when one can prove that the income is below standard. GKK provides physical therapy after accidents or surgery when needed. There is physical therapy as prevention for an operation.

GKK provides equipments to patients like crutches, wheel-chairs, etc. When the sick-leave is longer than the time period that the employer pays, it will be paid by the GKK. After a sick-leave from work, the form from the physician must be given to the GKK and they will give you a form to give to your employer. The GKK can control you at home to check if you are really ill, and at home in bed. If the illness, is too long period, then it is possible that you may have to come and be checked by the GKK doctors.

GKK has the majority of specialists in their ambulances (except lung-specialists).

It is important to visit a doctor who has a contract with the GKK otherwise it becomes very expensive (there is a partial refund from the doctors that have no contract). Maternity benefits are not automatically paid; a person has to apply for it at the GKK. There is a problem that some employers do not register their new employees and therefore they aren't health insured.

Even though it is a law to automatically register new employees. When a person stops working either from the employer's side or himself, this person should check if the GKK-health insurance is continuing through the Unemployment office or if insured through the partner.

If one has worked at least 6 months, they have a 21 day coverage after the end of the working period. It can be very expensive if one needs a hospital and they believe themselves to have coverage and there is no coverage. It is better to check at the GKK if you are insured!

Sometimes, even though it is against the law, the employer does not have the employee insured. If there are problems, contact the GKK and you can have assistance from the

Arbeiterkammer to sue the employer if you do become costs because of his failure to register you. No one should just assume everything is in order. It is each person's responsibility to know how the health insurance works for them, to avoid misunderstandings. Another place that can be helpful with workplace problems is the ArbeiterKammer. Mr. Gigl stated that he will attempt to see if it is possible for GKK to make translations from information brochures.

He stressed the importance of general medical check-ups as prevention is better than cure.

3.) Christina Anderwald (Marienambulanz)

The Marienambulanz caters for Austrians and foreigners who have no health insurance.

Since May, 1, 2004 there is a new Refugee Law whereby all refugee seekers living in refugee homes are insured by GKK. They must go to the GKK and register. 3,500 patients from 71 nations (majority from Nigeria) have been treated in the Marienambulanz. Ms. Anderwald is the only full-time nurse with voluntary doctors and most medications are received from donations. No appointment is necessary but the hours are from Mon.-Fri. 12-2pm but all waiting patients are treated even until 3pm. Patients are referred to specialists for further management. Psychiatrists visit the clinic once a week.

Change of food, weather, etc. can be an influence on the general health status of some patients.

This might lead to psycho-social illnesses eg. stomachaches, headaches, etc. A pregnancy test is done for free. There are an increase number of unwanted pregnancies from African women. With consent, HIV testing is done for free. It was asked that anyone who knows someone without health insurance to pass the information about the existence of Marienambulanz.

4.) Catherine McGeeney (Steirische Aidshilfe)

Catherine is a social worker from England who works with Africans who are HIV +. She explained what is HIV & AIDS, how HIV is transmitted and not transmitted, signs & symptoms of AIDS, and that there is no cure but there is treatment. Catherine encouraged people to come for testing accompanied by pre- and post test counselling which is free, anonymous and confidential. She also emphasised the importance of pregnant women being tested so as to be able to reduce chances of infecting their unborn babies with HIV. Catherine stressed also that between infection and test result, there needs to be a period of 3 months for accuracy ("window period"). Prevention is important, eg. "Safer-Sex" using condoms, they are freely available at Steirische Aidshilfe at Schmiedgasse 38. Tel: 815050. Hrs. Wed. 11am-1pm; Fri. 5pm-7pm; Catherine herself is available every Thurs. mornings. Problems facing persons who are HIV+ are: fear of loneliness, stigmatisation, discrimination and rejection from their own communities. She encouraged people to support people who are HIV+ as most of them do not have families in Austria.

5.) Katherina Stadlober (Eltern-Kind Zentrum)

Because the Welfare Office financially supports this organisation, services are now free.

There are English and French translators to assist communication.

Eltern-Kind Zentrum offers legal advice, social help, individual information and counselling. They have baby clothes, assistant & escort to doctors, offices etc. financial aid applications, help at home after the baby is born eg. cooking. She stated that they offer "Help to Self-Help" and invited us all to come to the center and receive further information.

Veada together with participants summarized what they had specially liked in the discussion: the info about HIV/AIDS, GKK info, Pregnancy info, contacting Notarzt before going immediately to the hospital when sick or child is ill, balanced nutrition is important especially when weak from illness, for children and pregnant women.

What is needed:

Translations of information that pertains to women's health, and children.

Attendance of German language courses and translators for visiting doctors and clinics.

Also the importance of attending antenatal classes with language understanding.

NOTE: Other topics of interest which were initially planned cancelled because of shortage of time

but need to be discussed in the future.

- A. General Health (need for vaccinations, nutrition, preventative check-ups, etc.)
- B. Family Planning (types of protection against pregnancy, how many children, problems of career and raising children, etc.)
- C. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) problem in Graz or not?

SUMMARY

The discussion was fruitful and participants were actively participating, asking questions and answered successfully.

Important issues discussed were:

Austrian health system

maternity benefits

health insurance

general information about HIV/AIDS

services rendered at Marienambulanz

ante and post natal services offered at Eltern-Kind Zentrum

The importance of learning German

IMPORTANT POINTS for the FUTURE:

1. Needed translations of information into different languages concerning health institutions and organisations (Brochures).
2. African women need to learn about the Austrian Health System
3. When African women have health problems there should be a central place that they know about to get direction, answers, information and counselling.
4. It would be good for African women to have a AFRICAN WOMEN´S NETWORK to help them to help themselves.
5. African women need to learn the importance of attending German courses.
6. Pregnant African women should know about and attend antenatal classes

All guests and participants were thanked.

And it was agreed to try and continue discussing HEALTH ISSUES in the future.