



**Exploring the experience of newly arrived migrant  
and refugee pupils with the preventive school  
health service and referral to primary health care**

MaNaMa Youth Healthcare  
Masterthesis  
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# Background



- 2015 ⇒

- 2005(Keersmaekers et al): quantitative study - barriers in referral to primary healthcare
  - other priorities
  - financial barrier
  - residence status

# Background - Literature

- physical - psychological health problems
- Unaccompanied minors
- Health <->
  - trauma exposure
  - duration asylumprocedure
  - living conditions hosting country
  - how many times moving between centres
- Resilience
- Culture sensitive health care - frame of reference



# PURPOSE

- Explore :
  - how newly arrived pupils experience
    - Preventive health care consultation in school
    - Accessibility of primary health care after referral
    - Support of school preventive health Service in their referral.
  - Which elements are necessary to have a successful referral to primary health care service
- Recommendations in good practice

# METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative study
  - Focusgroups
  - semi-structured interviews
- Inclusion (interviews):
  - >15year, newly arrived pupils
  - school preventive consultation → referral
  - wide range nationalities/reason referral

# RESULTS FOCUSGROUPS

1. Minimal knowledge healthcare system home country or Belgium
2. Parents
3. Unaccompanied minors
  - More Independent
  - Less support environment

# RESULTS INTERVIEWS

- **Culture sensitive care**

*[...] If we go to the medical consultation, in general pupils have to undress. but the doctor of the school, she didn't oblige anyone to undress. some pupils are very shy to stand there without any clothes, and they respected that, and that is very important. this is for some pupils, it depends on their culture.*

*A, Syrië*

- **Support in Referral**

*I lived in the refugee centre, and when I came to the consultation, the doctor told me I had to wear glasses, [...] and she sent an email to my assistant and then my assistant told me I had an appointment [...], and that I could go to the ophthalmologist.*

*J, Afghanistan, unaccompanied minor.*

# RESULTS INTERVIEWS

- **Referral → Parents**

*My father made the appointment  
F, Niger*

*My father brought me to the hospital and the pharmacy to buy medication.  
T, Ghana*

*First I didn't know how to make an appointment, but my father, he is already here for 15 years, and he knows everything about Belgium. that makes it much easier. He made the appointment.  
K, Afghanistan*

*My father told me I had to go, if not it would get worse.  
A, Afghanistan*

# RESULTS INTERVIEWS

- **Referral → Unaccompanied minor**

*My assistant made the appointment. [...] And I went all by myself. Ja, I really want to do it on my own [...], but because I am not really independent, they will help me to learn how I can make an appointment en how I can go somewhere.[...]*

*J, Afghanistan, NBM*

# RESULTS INTERVIEWS

- **Failed Referral**

“The school doctor told me I had a problem, and he gave me a referral letter. For us this wasn't such a big problem, because it is the ears. we don't have any other problems. [...]

I don't feel it so that's why I think I am not sick.

A, Afghanistan

# RESULTS INTERVIEWS

- **Barriers**

Sometimes there is the problem of language. my family doctor is Afghan, so that's no problem, but in the hospital this could be a problem, because language is a problem.

A, Afghanistan

The day of the appointment I had a big headache, and so I missed the bus. the specialist said to me I had to make another appointment, so I was kind of disappointed. [...]I didn't know how long the bus would take to reach the hospital. I think that's the most difficult, transport to get there.

H, Somalië

Yes, as long as we didn't get money from the OCMW (Public centre social welfare), it was a problem.

A, Afghanistan

# RESULTS INTERVIEWS

- **Concept “sickness” and cultural dimension**

*In Afghanistan, people, especially girls and women, cannot go out by themselves.[...] If a woman is sick, she gets permission to go to the doctor, if she is fully covered. she cannot talk to the doctor. [...] Her husband or brother will talk to the doctor, and there will come a women to feel her belly for example. they are very strict.*

*K, Afghanistan*

# DISCUSSION

- Parents!
- Unaccompanied minors → support
- Language
- Culture sensitive healthcare
- Priorities
- Knowledge Belgian Health care system

# Recommendations

- **Parents**

- Involve parents from the beginning!
- “parent-consult”, with/without pupil
- presence in school at parental reunion (evaluation student)
- Permanence in school
- Feedback after preventive consult

- **Unaccompanied minors**

- Extra care → uniformisation, transparency and direct communication

- **Language:**

important to check and find a way to talk efficiently  
(language student, interpreter, google translate,...)

# Recommendations

- **Culture sensitive care**
  - frame of reference → importance trust
- **knowledge Belgian Health care system**
  - Schools support
  - Education pupils (parents?) about primary healthcare system Belgium.

Thank you for  
your attention!

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**“YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND,  
NO ONE PUTS THEIR CHILDREN IN  
A BOAT  
UNLESS THE WATER IS SAFER  
THAN THE LAND”**

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WARSAN SHIRE, BRITISH-SOMALI POET