

COMMENTARY ON “LETTER TO THE EDITOR” AFTER “INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOUR IN ROMA POPULATION”

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The response to the article confirms the importance of conducting surveys identifying individual aspects of Roma life. The results of partial surveys are a significant contribution to ensuring permanent monitoring of current health problems of the Roma population. They are a necessary precondition for providing assistance to this population group. At the same time, the publication of findings enables international comparison and the search for common solutions. International comparisons of culturally identical or close countries, such as Serbia, are particularly important.

Diabelková et al. (1) are also of the opinion that it is necessary to start with consistent data collection and creation of information databases about the Roma. Their subsequent analysis can be considered a necessary prerequisite for getting the picture that is realistic, or as close to reality as possible, in terms of the health situation. According to the authors, the analysis of the observed relationships should be understood as one of the possible ways of searching and learning, while communication with other relevant disciplines (ethnography, culture, history, etc.) is a prerequisite for a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the Roma way of life.

Experts confirm that the most important factors influencing the current situation of the state of reproductive health, but also overall health, of the majority of the Roma population in Slovakia include the level of education achieved and poorer access to health care (2).

Raising the level of health awareness of Roma women and improving access to health care can be a means of increasing

women's interest in preventive check-ups. This may be the subject of further research.

According to Diabelková et al. (1), the isolation of settlements inhabited by many Roma communities causes considerable misinformation about accessibility and rights to health care and distrust in official health institutions. Due to complicated access to health care caused by various factors (long distance from the health centre, insufficient hygiene, discrimination of Roma in health care facilities, lack of access to prescription drugs for financial reasons, etc.), the current Roma population visits a doctor only in case of serious health problems.

Therefore, it is important to support the work of community health workers and to stimulate cooperation between the community health workers, paediatricians and gynaecologists in order to overcome institutional barriers in mother-and-child care for mothers living in Roma settlements.

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