

Report 2020 of the EUPHA Section on Migrant and Ethnic Minority Health (MEMH)

The year 2020 commenced with expectations of acceleration of the momentum generated from a number of initiatives at the Global and European level on Migrant Health in 2019 including the EUPHA Marseille Conference that focussed on solidarity. The faint glimmer of hope that Migrant and ethnic minority health, at national and local level, would receive some attention was very quickly dashed with the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic late January. It would not be an exaggeration to state that since then everyone, in every corner of the world regardless of background has been impacted by the pandemic in one way or the other.

From early on the writing on the wall regarding the nature of the pandemic indicated that ‘the chain of preventive measures is only as strong as its weakest link ignoring or forgetting these groups might cost them not only their lives but will undoubtedly have an impact on controlling the pandemic.’ Our section lost no time and the COVID 19 statement and call for action was prepared by the EUPHA MEMH Section Steering Committee on behalf of its membership: *Reducing the impact of the coronavirus crisis on those ‘left behind’ – Disadvantaged Migrants and Ethnic Minorities (MEM)*.

This call has been followed actively by the EUPHA MEMH section members (approx. 2000) and beyond. As individuals, communities, workplaces and countries went into lockdown and or other measures were put into place; the data that began to come in confirmed the disproportionate risk for migrants and ethnic minorities. Section members were involved in producing and generating data as well as working with risk mitigation measures for these groups. Data and knowledge was generated at an unprecedented speed making it difficult to keep abreast of all developments. The section platform was used to disseminate information and to connect members working on similar issues. While several planned activities and events had to be postponed, cancelled or were unable to gain momentum several new initiatives driven by the need of the hour arose. The planned preconference related to WUPHA 2020 and launch of the Global Society MERH in October was extremely successful including publications regarding the society. Our section working groups have continued to work and while some have actively pursued publication- like working group on Economic Arguments others have not been as productive. A working group on COVID 19 and migrants has been established under the leadership of Charles Agyemang as part of GSMERH. While 2020 slowed down activities it is our belief that the experiences gained in 2020 will steer our section back on track in 2021 in particular with regards to the strategy development in the longer term.

Section Activities 2020

1. **EUPHA STATEMENT** - This statement and call for action has been prepared by the EUPHA MIG Section Steering Committee, and received contributions from members and non-members. It was published at the EUPHA web site, disseminated to the section members, presented at the section meeting in the context of the WUPHA conference 2020, and translated to reach different countries (e.g. into Spanish). Full contents can be consulted at https://eupha.org/repository/advocacy/EUPHA_statement_on_migrant_and_ethnic_minority_health.pdf

2. **Pre Conference** - The Section has worked closely in the planning of the digital preconference at WUPHA 2020 entitled '*Migration, ethnicity, racism and the COVID-19 pandemic: key perspectives on a global crisis*'. The pre-conference brought together leading scholars to discuss some key perspectives on how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the health and well-being of migrants, ethnic minorities and Indigenous peoples around the world and what could be done to lessen the impact. The meeting was chaired by Prof. Charles Agyemang & Prof. Allan Krasnik and began with the official launch of the Global Society on Migration, Ethnicity, Race and Health by Prof. Bernedette Kumar. Thereafter, there were a series of presentations by eminent speakers including Q&A and a concluding panel discussion. The meeting was very well attended. As usual the section has participated in the reviewing of abstracts concerning migrant and ethnic minority health. ⁶
3. **Launch of Global Society on Migration, Ethnicity, Race and Health**. The work of the interim committee with strong support of EUPHA MEMH SECTION and EUPHA Secretariat since 2018 was brought to fruition with the launch of the GSMERH at the Pre-Conference. The website is now live and functioning. The Society is currently being registered and committee members are working on implementing the agreed upon priorities for the society.
4. **Section meeting**. In the context of the WUPHA conference, this year section meeting took place virtually. We counted more than 40 attendants. A summary of the years activities (above) was presented, and among the points discussed, the EUPHA MEMH conference every two years, and its alternance with the pre-conferences and the GSMERH conferences. (no minutes, but presentations are available)

Participation of Section in International Conferences/Events

The Presidency of the Section continues to present issues of migrant and ethnic minority health at international and national meetings and to review and contribute to European publications on migrant and ethnic minority health. This year's participation has been active despite being only digital.

Collaboration

The Section continues the strong collaboration with WHO Europe, ECDC and Lancet Migration. This includes participation in various COVID 19 related initiatives, meetings and projects.

As a follow-up of the meeting organised by the University of Pécs last year, in collaboration with WHO Europe that Maria Luisa attended as vice president of the Section, she was invited to join the task force concerned with migrants health information in Europe, which started to work at the beginning of this year led by Kayvan Bozorgmehr and with the participation of other steering committee (Allan Krasnik, István Szilárd) and section members. The task force was invited by the Migration Health Programme of WHO EURO to provide input on the draft concept note for the Technical guidance for the collection of data on refugee and migrant health, including comparable indicators, to guide member states on how to collect migration health data. The Guidance has just been published (<https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/migration-and-health/publications/2020/collection-and-integration-of-data-on-refugee-and-migrant-health-in-the-who-european-region-2020>)

EUPHA MEMH Section Strategy

Based on past experiences of what has worked and past gains Past President Allan Krasnik developed a strategy for the section jointly with the Steering Committee and it was endorsed at the Section Meeting in Marseille (2019). The section strategy is guiding the work of the section though in 2020 implementation slowed down due to COVID 19.

General communications / Reports/ Publications

The Presidency continues through the Mailman System to distribute frequent communications to the increasing number of section members regarding new publications, relevant international meetings on migrant and ethnic minority health and other subjects of general interest related to the section theme.

A summary report of the track on Migration and health at the 12th European Public Health conference 2019 in Marseille, France was published by Kalila Jaeger and Friederike Schwarzkopf (EUPHA fellows at the EPH conference 2019) with the following key messages

- Building bridges for solidarity means leaving no one behind; migrants, regardless of status or definition, must be included in health policies just as migration policies must include health. Anti science, anti-immigration and xenophobic sentiments, justify politically coloured health policies that increase health inequities for migrants.
- Evidence-informed health policies should ensure the health needs of migrants are fully addressed and no one should die or be put in danger by limited or no access to healthcare. The public health narrative needs to evolve to support greater health equity.
- Migrant health research, is crucial to generate valid data to inform policy makers in order to plan, implement and adjust health interventions and services. Diversity in our societies must be acknowledged; practices and interventions should be adapted and evaluated taking into account the needs and context.

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