

## Health Communication needs of health professionals in Europe – the H-COM cross sectional study

Konstantina Zota

*K Zota<sup>1</sup>, P Karnaki<sup>1</sup>, A Veloudaki<sup>1</sup>, T Tsiampalis<sup>1</sup>, A Linos<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Institute of Preventive Medicine, Environmental & Occupational Health, Marousi, Greece

Contact: [d.zota@prolepsis.gr](mailto:d.zota@prolepsis.gr)

### **Background:**

Effective communication between Health Professionals (HP) and patients is crucial for the overall functioning of the healthcare system with positive impacts on readmission rates, treatment outcomes, adherence and costs. However, health communication training is limited especially during medical training. In the framework of the EU H-COM project an exploration of health communication needs and gaps and preferred training methods was performed among HP.

### **Methods:**

A cross-sectional online survey was conducted among 702 health professionals (Physicians: n = 315; Nurses: n = 258; Other: n = 129) through a purpose made questionnaire available in English, Greek, Polish, Spanish and German.

### **Results:**

Health communication training is considered necessary for physicians (89.8%) and nurses (89.7%), although 42.4% of them never received relevant training in the past. Professional status ( $p < 0.001$ ), age ( $p = 0.079$ ), gender ( $p = 0.090$ ) and years of experience ( $p = 0.012$ ) affected the likelihood of not having received such training, with physicians, HPs aged 45-54 years old, males and those having 6-10 years of experience being most in need. At least 50.0% reported encountering

problems in communicating with their patients and facing several barriers either in primary health care settings and hospitals or in private practice. The ability to listen and answer patients, deliver bad news and obtain medical history were the most important communication skills identified, while the most suitable training method was learning relevant practical skills. The availability of such trainings is reported as being fair or poor at all educational levels by the majority.

**Conclusions:**

Health communication training is considered important although currently not available to the extent needed. This research provides evidence concerning the preferred type, frequency and mode of health communication training providing also insight on differences between various HPs.

**Key messages:**

- Health communication training is crucial but inadequate in Europe. There are specific training needs and preferences among HP which need to be considered.
- Health communication training needs to be adapted and tailored to professionals' age, experience and status.