



RESPOND Newsletter

Welcome to the latest newsletter of the RESPOND research project,

The aim of the project, which is funded by the German Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), is to improve the evidence base for refugee health service provision in Germany. The project covers five years (2016-2021) and nine work packages, in which we investigate important research questions using qualitative, quantitative and routine data sources. We are now in the second phase of the project, in which interventions to overcome access barriers will be piloted and evaluated.

In this issue of the newsletter, we would like to inform you about changes within the project and share key project results from 2020. Our work this year was heavily influenced by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. We were able to conduct a study on Covid-19 in shared refugee accommodation on behalf of the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA), looking at measures implemented by regional authorities responsible for the accommodation of refugees (COVMIG project).

Unfortunately, the event planned for March 2020, had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Instead, we would now like to cordially invite you to a virtual presentation of the important results from the RESPOND and COVMIG projects on 23 March 2021.

Given the importance of dissemination for the aims of our project, we were delighted to be able to present several research streams at the 16th World Congress on Public Health. In addition, we were able to successfully publish the results of our literature review on health system resilience and qualitative insights into medical care for asylum seekers in reception centres in peer-reviewed journals.

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us during this challenging year. We wish you all happy holidays, a good start into the new year and, above all, good health.

Kind regards from Heidelberg
Prof. Dr. Kayvan Bozorgmehr (*principal investigator*),
Andreas W. Gold, M.Sc. (*project coordination*)
and the entire research team

Online event:
"Health care for refugees before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic: research results and public health priorities from the projects COVMIG and RESPOND".

23 March 2021 (09:30 AM - 1:00 PM) | Virtual conference via Zoom.

Since 2016, the research project RESPOND has been investigating the health care for refugees in Germany, including the identification of barriers and facilitating factors in the structure of the health care system. The results of the study will be presented at the event, with a special focus on the health care for refugees in the context of regional accommodation centres.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the aim of the COVMIG project was to conduct a short-term analysis of the situation in reception facilities and shared accommodation for refugees in Germany, and to identify measures and needs of the reception authorities in this context. In total, 46 interviews were conducted between May and July 2020, which revealed a high degree of heterogeneity with regard to the nature of the outbreak and the measures taken.

Findings from the two research projects will be discussed jointly, deriving options for action to improve the health situation for refugees. The event is intended for all interested parties, especially authorities responsible for the accommodation of refugees at the regional level, but also social workers and health authorities.

Further details on the event will follow in the new year. You are welcome to register your interest in the event now with Andreas Gold (andreas.gold@med.uni-heidelberg.de).



Results on medical care for asylum seekers in reception centres published

Based on a qualitative interview study and a one-day symposium with actors from medical outpatient clinics in reception centres in Germany, we were able to gain important insights into the organisation of health care structures in this context. Central findings are:

1. Quality and extent of care varies depending on the location of the facility. To avoid a "lottery" of unequal health treatment, we recommend to defining nationwide minimum standards of medical care in reception facilities.
1. An unclear distribution of roles and tasks within the outpatient clinics results in an increased physical and psychological burden on staff.
2. The coordination of care is often carried out informally by non-medical staff. This should be formalised; experiences with so-called "Refugee Health Nurses" from other country contexts can serve as positive examples.

The analysis recently published in the *Bundesgesundheitsblatt* comes to the following conclusion:

The study shows the need for organisational, legal and administrative action in reception centres, which still exists four years after the immigration of a high number of asylum seekers and refugees to Germany. Although the acute challenges of ensuring health care for refugees have been overcome, the medium- and long-term formation of structures and processes has partly failed to materialise. From the perspective of organisational and system development, leadership is needed that - beyond federal responsibilities - provides a framework for the evolved care structures by setting standards on a sustainable and future-oriented foundation. In view of the increasing length of stay in the reception centres, it is normatively necessary to create comparable conditions for the health care of refugees in Germany.

The publication is available online: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00103-020-03243-3>

RESPOND at the 16. World Congress of Public Health

Results from the RESPOND project or using the RESPOND dataset were presented at the digital 16th World Congress of Public Health.

An overview of the presented topics and links to the respective abstracts are available on our website: <https://respond-study.org/en/conference-abstracts/>

Results of a review on the resilience of health systems published

The Covid-19 pandemic has increased interest in the absorptive, adaptive and / or transformative capacities of the health system during times of rapid change and makes the need for a resilient health system particularly clear.

An important contribution to the theoretical-conceptual understanding of the term "resilience" in health system research is provided by our systematic literature review.

The review highlights that the way resilience is currently applied in the empirical literature does not correspond to its theoretical foundations. To do justice to the complexity of the resilience concept, findings from both quantitative and qualitative research traditions should be integrated into a comprehensive assessment framework.

The evaluation published in the October issue of Health Policy and Planning can also be accessed online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czaa032>.

Project News

Since the middle of the year, the RESPOND project has been part of the newly founded Section Health Equity Studies & Migration within the Department of General Medicine and Health Services Research at Heidelberg University Hospital, headed by Professor Dr Kayvan Bozorgmehr. This institutional anchoring of our research focus will facilitate future research projects in this area and ensures the continuation of our activities, which were successfully initiated within the framework of the RESPOND project funding.

Clara Perplies and Andreas W. Gold joined the research group as new research fellows in the second quarter of 2020:



Andreas W. Gold is a nursing and public health scientist as well as a registered nurse and will be responsible for the scientific project coordination in the second project phase; piloting and evaluating interventions to overcome barriers to care. One focus will be on the role of nurses in the health care of refugees.



Clara Perplies is a public health scientist and physiotherapist and was already associated with the RESPOND project through her master's thesis on a peer group intervention to promote mental health in a community setting. In addition to qualitative data analysis of RESPOND results, she is also involved in piloting and evaluating intervention approaches as part of the second funding phase of the project.

Louise Biddle and Maren Hintermeier will continue to support the RESPOND project.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the piloting of intervention approaches in the field has been delayed as key actors are tied up by the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, we will continue to work intensively on developing and preparing options for action to improve health care for refugees. We are looking forward to presenting these and discussing them with you on 23th March 2021.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to interested colleagues. You can subscribe to the newsletter on our homepage: <https://respond-study.org/en/contact/>

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