

## Reporting infectious diseases in migrants

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Reporting infectious diseases is important. When healthcare professionals report patients with infectious diseases promptly and thoroughly, then authorities will be better able to prevent the spread of these diseases.

But it is not always that simple. Healthcare professionals are not always as good at reporting as they should be, and so there are continual concerns about under-reporting.

There have been particular concerns about the reporting of infectious disease in migrants. Migrants often cannot speak the language in their new country and so might not be able to answer detailed questions about their medical history. Migrants may also worry that admitting to having certain diseases could affect their residency status or that they could be placed in isolation and removed from their family. Some migrants just want to avoid any contact with the authorities. These factors could result in under-reporting of infectious diseases.

But there are other factors that could result in over-reporting of infectious diseases among migrants. One of the main factors in this regard is that migrants are more likely to be subject to infectious disease surveillance programmes than members of the general population.

All this points to uncertainty with regard to the reporting of infectious disease in migrants.

Giorgi-Rossi and colleagues have recently conducted an intelligent review to see if they could clear up at least some of this uncertainty. (1) They reviewed the literature to look for evidence that infectious diseases are under or over-reported in migrants.

Interestingly they found that there is little evidence that infectious diseases are under-reported in migrants. The main reason for this is that there are often screening programmes in place for migrants and also because doctors are more likely to think about infectious diseases when seeing a patient who is a migrant.

The authors draw some simple conclusions. They suggest a focus on “improving the existing systems for native and migrant populations alike”. They also suggest reporting that is more thorough and that includes all the variables that might be important (such as country of origin and detailed history of migration).

This work by Giorgi-Rossi and colleagues is important. There are 65.6 million displaced people in the world. (2) Some of these are migrants and some are internally displaced. As a global community we must continue our efforts to ensure that we recognise and report infectious diseases in all populations – including migrant ones.

## References

1. *Giorgi-Rossi P, Riccardo F, Pezzarossi A, Ballotari P, Dente MG, Napoli C, Chiarenza A, Velasco Munoz C, Noori T, Declich S. Factors Influencing the Accuracy of Infectious Disease Reporting in Migrants: A Scoping Review. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2017 Jul 5;14(7). pii: E720. doi: 10.3390/ijerph14070720.*
2. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/there-are-now-more-refugees-than-the-entire-population-of-the-uk/>