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Published in:
European Journal of Public Health

DOI:
[10.1093/eurpub/ckq129](https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckq129)

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Koopmans, G. T., Foets, M., & Devillé, W. (2010). Is informal care a substitution for home care among migrants in The Netherlands? *European Journal of Public Health*, 20(Supplement 1), 153-154.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckq129>

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Is informal care a substitution for home care among migrants in The Netherlands?

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Background

Among migrants the level of home care use seems to be lower than among the native population. As migrants may prefer informal care for several reasons, they possibly use these sources of care instead of home care.

We therefore, examined the use of home care in relation to household characteristics and the use of informal care, in order to see how these factors contribute to the explanation of ethnic disparities in home care use.

Method

Data were used from a survey among the native population aged ≥ 18 years, carried out in the framework of the second Dutch National Survey of General Practice ($N = 7772$). An additional sample was drawn from the four largest migrant

groups in The Netherlands, i.e. those originating from Surinam ($N=297$), the Dutch Antilles ($N=262$), Morocco ($N=370$) and Turkey ($N=400$).

The survey contained information on home care use, informal care, indicators of need, household composition, informal social contacts, language mastery and acculturation.

Results

Among the native population 6.2% was using home care. Among migrants this percentage varied from 6.3% among Antilleans, 4.8% among Surinamese, 4% among Turks and 2.2% among Moroccan. After correcting for need, household characteristics and the use of informal care, home care use was lower among all migrant groups compared with the native population, except among the Antilleans. Use of informal care did not reduce but rather enhanced the use of home care. It did not explain ethnic disparities in home care use.

Conclusions

Household composition and use of informal care are related to use of home care, but cannot explain ethnic disparities in utilization. Informal care use seems to function as a supplement to home care, possibly bridging the gap to home care use.