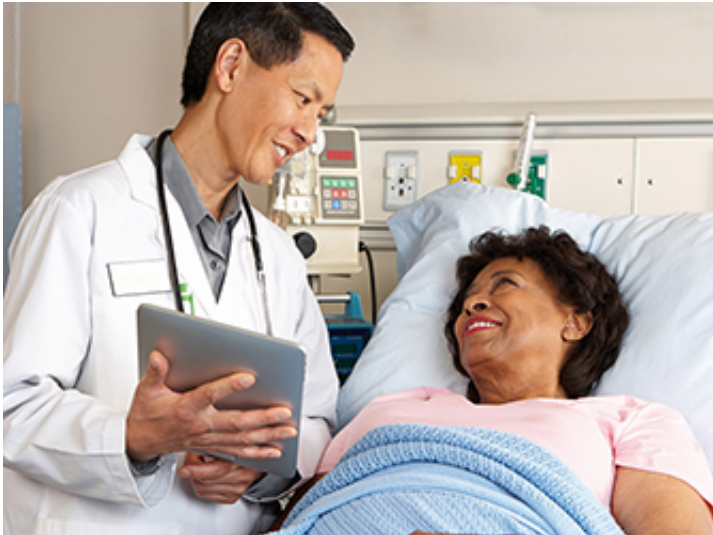


Influence of migration on health

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Migration has a significant influence on the health sector, including in Austria. The healthcare sector faces challenges due to migrants' different social status, background and gender, as Christine Binder-Fritz and Anita Rieder from the Institute of Social Medicine at the Centre for Public Health at the MedUni Vienna point out in the latest issue of the German "Federal Health Bulletin".

Meeting people who are from a migration background or who are refugees is an everyday occurrence in the [healthcare sector](#) nowadays. The major social, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity associated with this is becoming apparent in general healthcare institutions - hospital

staff, practising doctors and consultants, pharmacists and therapists are all facing a variety of different challenges. The relationship between migration and health is complex. Gender, background and socio-economic status in particular are key starting points in the fight to effectively counteract health-related inequalities.

Female migrants are worst affected

Women in particular have a difficult time of things. Their often lower [social status](#) within the family, combined with poorer working conditions and scarcer financial resources, as well as a poorer living situation, can have a negative impact on their health. "Female [migrants](#) often suffer additional discrimination due to their gender and background, and are therefore certainly among the least-privileged social groups within our society," explains Christine Binder-Fritz. The mental stresses of migration are equally tremendous for men and women alike, however.

Disadvantages due to language, gender and access barriers

"The most common problem we see in everyday medicine is one of understanding and care due to language barriers," says Anita Rieder, Head of the Centre for Public Health at the MedUni Vienna. There are also numerous socio-cultural aspects such as the gender-specific role behaviour learned by men and women which plays a part during routine examinations by doctors.

But even access to healthcare institutions can be made more difficult for migrants due to a number of different reasons. This is especially true for migrants and asylum seekers who are new to the country. Says Christine Binder-Fritz: "These barriers include language difficulties, a lack of information about the healthcare system, low socio-economic status,

migrants' own interpretations of their [health](#) problems or culture-specific preconceptions about causes of illness."

Lifestyle and genetic risk factors

Taking into consideration non-communicable diseases, numerous studies point out differences among the various migrant groups. Some have a higher risk of cardiovascular disease or diabetes, which is due both to lifestyle-related risk factors (such as eating unhealthily, smoking, being overweight and not taking enough exercise) as well as genetic predisposition (such as diabetes mellitus in migrants from Pakistan).

Provided by Medical University of Vienna

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