Use of aged care services among older Greek migrants: user and provider perspectives

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Background

> Policy emphasis on ageing in the community with informal support, and/or formal services

> Around 20% of people aged 65+ are migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds

> Older migrants typically prefer to be cared for by family members and resist engaging with formal sector
Background

> Despite decades of policy to improve ‘cultural sensitivity’ of aged care services, still barriers and reluctance to use

> Lack of consultation with older migrants, in their own language, about perceived barriers
Methods

> N=70 older Greek migrants

  – 22 in-depth interviews
  – 4 focus groups
  – Conducted in Modern Greek

> Age range 64-90; mean age 79
  > Most married and had lived in Australia for around 50yrs

> Asked: knowledge and use of formal services, access and acceptability, role of informal support
Methods

> N=22 aged-care service providers

- NGO’s, Local, State and Federal Government programs, Private Practitioners
- Ethno-specific and mainstream
- Telephone survey

• Asked: types of services provided, forms of advertising used, referral sources, number of older Greeks, waiting times/costs, barriers to service use, use of interpreters/availability of Greek-speaking staff
Findings

- Main themes to emerge
  - Older Greeks experience access issues
  - Rely heavily on family in preference to formal services, either for support or to locate, negotiate, and monitor services
  - Barriers: cost, transport, availability, language, literacy and cultural attitudes
Older Greeks

> Knowledge of formal services
  – Few aware of services available unless already linked
  – Confusion over which agency provided services
  – Feel more likely to prefer and trust information about services from other Greeks
  – Lack of written information in Greek language
  – Those who did use formal services were usually linked to them by others (usually adult children)
Older Greeks

> **Attitudes towards formal services**

*Language, Culture and Trust:*
- Preference for Greek-speaking providers
- Those who were more confident using English, traded convenience and availability over language and cultural accessibility

*Unmet Need:*
- Some unable to get specific type or frequency of service due to high cost, demand
- Would like more time allocated, e.g. for shopping, or assistance with large houses/blocks
Older Greeks

> Role of family
  – Provide support and negotiate with formal sector (e.g. arrange; go-between; attend home when provider expected; pay service fees; interpreting/advocating; transport
  – High expectations of family support, but also reciprocate
  – Spousal carers wish to do domestic work to maintain cultural role as family carer (esp. women)
  – Turn to formal services when family support no longer adequate or possible
**Service Providers**

> **Promoting services to Greeks**

- Most used pamphlets, fliers, websites, advertising on Greek radio, talks at groups and other forums
- Half had Greek translations of their services
- Those with Greek language availability didn’t advertise because they were usually over-subscribed
- Greek-specific providers felt lack of knowledge among older people (with family and other providers – GPs – main referrers)
Service Providers

> Barriers
  – transport
  – stigma/cultural issues expectations not to use formal services (should be able to rely on family);
  – language and literacy in both English and Greek
Service Providers

> Other issues

– Greek-speaking care workers often asked to assist outside their usual role (e.g. filling in documents, dealing with pension issues)
– Privacy/confidentiality when older people use family as interpreters
– Difficulty recruiting and retaining bi-lingual staff
– Only accepting formal services in an emergency, makes it difficult to provide appropriate level of services
– All agreed more could be done, but some questioned how they could manage increased level of demand
Implications

> Findings relevant to other groups of older migrants with similar cultural expectations and language barriers

> Service providers need to appreciate important role of family in way services are delivered and promoted

> Need to address access challenges posed by language and literacy


Thankyou