Utilization of preventive care among people with migrant Background

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Background
The European societies are increasingly challenged to ensure equal access to health services for migrant communities. Particularly, the use of preventive care should not strongly depend from social characteristics: Preventive services help to early detect health problems and mitigate health inequalities. We ask to what extend migrant background (MB) determines the utilization of preventive care.

Methods
The sample of the German Health Interview and Examination Survey for Adults (DEGS1) (2008-2012, n = 7,987) contains 1,107 respondents with MB. General health checks (GHC) and skin cancer screening (SCS) serve as exemplary outcomes. Apart from sex, age and socio-economic status (SES) logistic regression considers 1st and 2nd migrant generation, length of stay (1st generation) and 1- vs. 2-sided MB (2nd generation). Utilization rates are presented as model based predictions.

Results
Compared to non-migrants utilization is markedly lower especially in 1st generation migrants with short length of stay (<=5 years) (OR: 0.33 [95%-CI: 0.17-0.64] for SCS, OR: 0.38 [0.23-0.62] for GHC). For this sub-group predictions at medium age and SES result in utilization rates of 9.5% (95%-CI: 3.8-15.2) in men and 11.4% (4.5-18.3) in women for SCS and 21.8% (13.7-29.9) in men and 25.2% (16.2-34.2) in women for GHC. Service use is more than twice as high in non-migrants with predicted rates of 24.3% (21.7-26.8) in men and 28.2% (25.8-30.6) in women for SCS and 41.7% (38.1-45.2) in men and 46.2% (43.0-49.4) in women for GHC. Similar non-significant tendencies are found for 2nd generation migrants with 2-sided MB.

Conclusions
MB and length of stay strongly determine the utilization of preventive care. Thus, our findings suggest substantive inequities in access. Utilization should be increased by informing about existing services early after immigration. Whether inequities persist in 2nd generation migrants with 2-sided MB should be followed up in further research.

Key messages
- In migrant communities length of stay is a strong predictor for the utilization of preventive care
- To promote better access to care targeted information about existing services should start early after immigration