The Health Profiles Project “in brief”

“Health Profiles” (Perfis de Saúde) is a project of the Portugal’s Northern Region Health Administration, inspired by the Health Profiles of England initiative, which began on September 2007 and aims:

- to provide a permanently updated and available health profile of Portugal’s Northern Region and of its 86 municipalities, in order to monitor the populations health at the regional and local levels;
- to facilitate the access to relevant information about health and its determinants, usually scattered amongst several data bases and sources, by a wide and diverse audience - health professionals, decision makers, scientific and educational communities, other stakeholders and lay people in general - as a strategy of health communication and health literacy;
- to place health as a high priority in personal, professional and political agendas, as a strategy of health advocacy;
- to support personal, professional and political health decision making at the regional and local levels.

What has been done… What we shall do…

The Northern Region Health Profile (Perfil de Saúde da Região Norte), which was finished on February 2008, is available at the Northern Region Health Administration’s site (http://www.arsnorte.min-saude.pt/) and will be updated every 4 months. A “paper version”, also available on pdf format at the site and annually updated, has been completed and widely distributed throughout the Northern Region.

A marketing strategy is being developed in order to communicate efficiently the concept/ the trademark “Health Profiles” and its relevance for promoting public health and the public’s health to a wide and significant audience. A specific e-mail address was created (perfisdesaude@arsnorte.min-saude.pt) in order to encourage the scientific and educational communities and other stakeholders to share relevant information about the Northern Region population’s health, which will be used to update and further develop the Health Profiles.

After this first stage, Local Health Profiles will also be developed, helping the local public health services to further develop these profiles as well as to promote and advocate health and health literacy at the local level.

By the end of this year a first evaluation of the project will be undertaken.

What have we learned?...

As we are still on the initial stage of the project’s implementation, we haven’t got any results concerning its impact. Nevertheless, the model and concept underlying the “Health Profiles” project has been developed and the “Northern Region Health Profile” is already completed, using a format and language that, we think, is innovative in Portugal. And what we’ve learned till now is that…

- innovation and creativity are good “problem solving” tools, enabling us to meet impossible needs by adjusting goals and strategies to the available resources;
- we don’t (always) have to begin from scratch in order to be innovative and creative; quickly and humbly learning from other’s experiences is a good starter;
- it’s possible to develop an effective (we hope...) and innovative health information/ communication tool using nowadays basic information technology;
- it’s not easy to “keep it simple”; it’s been a learning process and we’re still working on it;
- promoting the sharing of relevant health information between different people, professionals, services, institutions and sectors is a neverending task and challenge.

Its VISION: Making information about health and its determinants available and meaningful to the widest audience possible, has the potential to become a strong and easily replicated instrument of (Public) Health Promotion.

Its GOAL: To promote health advocacy and literacy, by implementing health information/communication amongst all main stakeholders (including the health sector) in the Northern Region of Portugal.

Its STRATEGY: Developing an innovative and creative health information and communication tool and concept (trademark).

Its MOTO: “Keep it simple!” (Simplicity is the art of making complex information and concepts available and meaningful to the most large and diversified audiences possible).

Please, contact us by using the Health Profiles’ e-mail address: perfisdesaude@arsnorte.min-saude.pt

We’d love to hear and learn from you!