



# Use of health mediators to reach Roma population in Bulgaria

---

DILYANA DILKOVA

NATIONAL NETWORK OF HEALTH MEDIATORS-BULGARIA

[WWW.ZDRAVENMEDIATOR.NET](http://WWW.ZDRAVENMEDIATOR.NET)

MAY 2018

# National Network of Health Mediators

Established in 2007 after 6 years of advocacy for institutionalization of HM's profession

Members – more than 200 HMs, trainers of HMs, medical specialists

The biggest Roma organization in Bulgaria with members working daily on the field, among the most marginalized people

NNHM is an NGO financed only through projects and receives to state funding

2017 - 2nd prize winner – Award of the European Commission for NGOs with outstanding initiatives in the field of public health – “Promoting Vaccination”



# Health Mediators – profile and training

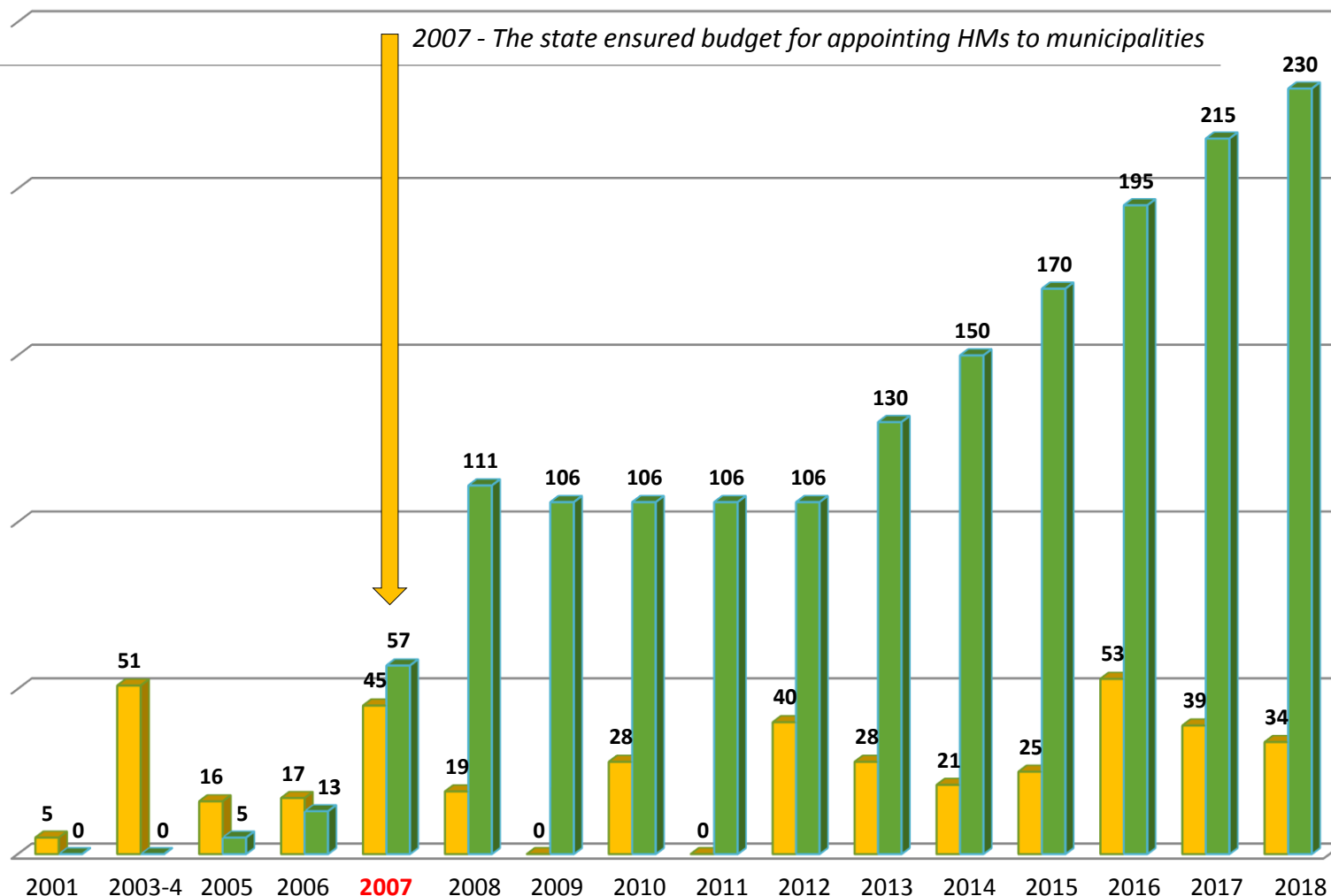
## Profile:

- women or men;
- graduated **secondary** education
- **belonging** to the local vulnerable community
- speaking the **language** of the community (Romani, Turkish)

**Initial training** – in Medical University-Sofia for 2 weeks

**Appointed at the municipalities**

2018 – **230 HMs** work in 27 districts in 117 municipalities



# Continuing education on immunizations

Regional meetings **Vaccine Academy** (2010-2013) – RHIs, GPs, paediatricians and HMs

National meetings **Initiative for Health and Vaccination** (since 2010) – all HMs, central and local institutions, Parliamentary Health Commission, medical specialists, NGOs

**Regional meetings** (2015-2018) – project **Together for Better Health** – sessions on recommended immunizations – HPV, Rotavirus – important information concerning the diseases and the vaccine, support of the contact with GPs.



# Field work and partnerships

---

HMs establish contacts with all local **GPs** and **Regional Health Inspection** (RHI)

**Mapping** of the community and actively search for under vaccinated children

**Measles epidemic in 2010** – teams from RHIs and HMs succeeded to vaccinate more than 188 000 children.



# How HMs address the immunization issue

## Permanent contact with local GPs:

- GPs prepare **lists** with names of children for obligatory vaccinations
- HPV/ Rotavirus - lists with names of girls aged 12 and 13 years/ babies 0-4 months

Sometimes HMs visit the families 4-5 times before they take their child to the GP for vaccination

HPV - In some districts RHI send **letters** to the parents of 12 and 13 year old girls

Organizing **health information sessions** in the community with lecturers from RHI or with the local GP.

***Dr Georgieva, GP, asked if she finds it needful to have a HM in Straldzha and why –***

*'It makes a lot of sense! He convinces them better than us – they are more sceptical towards us. The language barrier is a factor. The immunizations, the prophylactic check-ups – we have an established system. I give him a list and a note that he gives to the patient and the patient comes to me with this note. As strange as it is, this works – I don't know how Milio does it. He convinces the pregnant women to get health insured; he always succeeds to find the patients on different occasions. He organizes the people and they come to health information lectures which I carry out.'*



# HPV – National Program since 2012

---

## Scope:

2012 - 12 years old girls

2015 – 12 and 13 years old girls

2012 - Establishing local coordination teams of RHI representatives, HMs and other interested parties - carrying out of informational campaigns and meetings with GPs, school directors, teachers, parents.

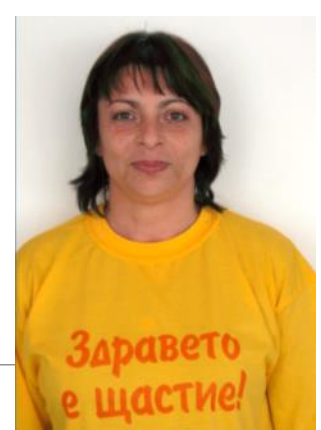
NNHM experience: **HPV prevention program is successful only in regions where RHI, GPs and HMs work together.**

## Good practices:

- RHIs send letters to parents of 12 and 13-years old girls;
- GPs give lists with names of the girls to HMs;
- HMs organize information meetings in the communities or go from door to door to speak with parents;
- HMs regularly participate in **trainings** and meetings on the topic of vaccinations, meet with medical specialists and colleagues-HMs.

# Dolni Tsibar – HPV Case study

---



When Dimitrina undertook the engagement to ensure HPV vaccination for the 12 and 13 year old girls in the village (which are about 15) firstly she organized a **meeting in the community** –

she invited parents of young girls and explained them all she acquainted on cervical cancer and its prevention at the **Regional meeting of HMs**.

Then she made several **visits from door to door** to see the parents of young girls in their homes and set the dates for vaccination.

***Dr Lyubomir Kirov, GP in Dolni Tsibar** – There is definitely a benefit from the work of the HM – we can see the result from the prophylaxis. I give her lists and things are going well. Her help leads to 100% implementation of the prophylactic programme. The HM helps me with preparing the people for the visit of medical specialists, she accompanies the patients; calls emergency aid when I am not around.*

# Feedback from HMs on HPV immunization issues

---

- Local **protestant churches** and priests are important opinion makers – their position towards vaccination is important.
- In the town of B. – only 1 GP recommends HPV vaccine; other 3 GPs say it is not obligatory so they are not obliged to recommend it (Rotavirus vaccine as well).
- Parents have fears and listen to rumours - HPV vaccine is administered at the time when young girls enter in **reproductive age** – parents are afraid of sterility.
- **Personal example** on behalf of HMs is highly valued – they belong to the communities.
- In Roma communities traditionally **mothers in law** are decision makers concerning health issues. In their youth they got fewer vaccinations – they are suspicious, they ask more and are more afraid.
- In Roma communities – generally no „antivax“ movement but **lack of information** and **poor communication and access** to GPs. GPs don't have the time to explain and address fears.
- HM's **informational campaigns** proved to be successful (2010 – measles, 2011 – polio; 2012 – HPV; 2018 – Rotavirus, etc.)

# Materials

ECDC flipbook **Let's talk about protection** (2014; 2018) **Immunization schedule-sticker for marginalized families**



Министерство на здравеопазването  
Национален център  
по заразни и паразитни болести  
София, България



НАЦИОНАЛНА МРЕЖА НА  
ЗДРАВНИТЕ МЕДИАТОРИ

## Да поговорим за предпазване от болести!

**Детските имунизации**  
информация на Европейския център за превенция и контрол на заболяванията (ECDC)  
Практическо ръководство за имунизации на ECDC



# Имунизационен календар

## на Република България – Задължителни и безплатни ваксини

Срещу заболяване от:	Ваксина	24 ч. след раждане	48 ч. след раждане	1 мес.	2 мес.	3 мес.	4 мес.	6 мес.	7 мес.	12 мес.	13 мес.	15 мес.	6 год.	7 год.	11 год.	12 год.	17 год.
ТУБЕРКУЛОЗА	BCG/ БЦЖ																
ХЕПАТИТ Б	HBV/ Хеп. Б																
ДИФТЕРИЯ, ТЕТАНУС, КОКЛЮШ (магарешка кашлица)	DTaP/ ДТКа																
ПОЛИОМИЕЛИТ (детски паралич)	IPV/ Пи																
ХЕМОФИЛУС ИНФЛУЕНЦЕ ТИП Б	HiB/ ХИБ																
ПНЕВМОКОКОВИ ИНФЕКЦИИ	PCV/ Пневмо																
МОРЕБИЛИ (дребна шарка), ПАРОТИТ (заушна) и РУБЕОЛА	MMR/ МНР																
ТЕТАНУС, ДИФТЕРИЯ	Td/ Дд																

Актуален към юли 2018 г.

(1): При прилагане на моновалентна хепатит Б ваксина. (2): При прилагане на комбинирана ваксина, съдържаща хепатит Б ваксина. (3): Проверка за белег след БЦЖ имунизацията. На децата без белег се прави проба Манту. Отрицателните се имунизират. (4): Римунизация след отрицателна проба Манту. (5): Не по-рано от 12 месеца след прилагане на третия прием.

Имунизацията е безплатна!  
Национална мрежа  
по инфекци и паразитни болести  
Национален център

# Other partnerships

---

Pharmaceutical companies GSK and MSD (both importing HPV vaccine in Bulgaria) are main supporters of the yearly national and regional meetings of HMs.

Since 2010 these partnerships have significantly contributed for ensuring continuing education on yearly basis of all HMs working in Bulgaria on broad range of topics, not limited to vaccination.

Support for convincing “difficult” GPs to offer the recommended vaccines to parents is also helpful.



Thank you!

