

Application of the Modified Method of “Rapid Appraisal to Assess Community Health Needs” for Making Rapid City Health Profiles and City Action Plans for Health

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Aim. To develop a method that Croatian cities could use in the development of the City Health Profile and City Health Plan. The assessment concerned cities that have recently experienced the war and thus the method had to be rapid, cheap, scientifically based, sensitive, participative (involving politicians, experts, and citizens), able to produce immediate action, and to sustain the gained benefits.

Method. A utilization-focused strategy was selected. Through ongoing interactions with intended information users, research questions were focused and the method of Rapid Appraisal to assess community health needs was selected as appropriate. This method was modified to: 1. assess the health of each city and serve as the basis for creating the City Health Profile; 2. select (Healthy City Project) priority areas; 3. establish the working groups on priority areas; and 4. build on the three previous steps to develop the City Action Plan for Health.

Results. During 1996, the Rapid Appraisal was applied in three Croatian cities (Pula, Metković, Rijeka). The work resulted in the completion of the City Health Profile, selection of the Project Priority Areas, formation of thematic working groups on priority areas, and acceptance of the agreed City Action Plan for Health. The method provided a scientifically based account of health in each of the three cities and identified targets for the future by using health-related measures and citizens' observations about the community, its problems, and potentials.

Conclusion. The method proved to be credible and sensitive to the social and cultural differences it encompassed.

Key words: community health education; Croatia; health and welfare planning; health campaigns; health care surveys; health planning; health resources; planning techniques