

**THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MEANING OF MOOD MODIFYING
MEDICINES**

EXPERIENCES OF GERMAN PRIMARY CARE PATIENTS, SPANISH
MIGRANTS IN GERMANY AND SPANIARDS LIVING IN SPAIN

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Aims: To uncover the social meanings of mood-modifying drugs and to describe the underlying connotations from the users' perspective of three different samples. They consist of German primary care patients, Spanish migrants in Germany and Spaniards living in Spain. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and German.

Methods and Main Outcomes: All three samples of the study were embedded in a primary care setting. Face-to-face interviews with users of mood-modifying drugs were audio taped and transcribed. Patients' concepts of mood-modifiers were extracted by theoretical coding. The method used is entitled Prospective Meta Ethnography. As key concepts are identified and compared, the method does not require the translation of entire interviews into a common language.

The attitudes of many patients towards mood altering pharmaceuticals changed throughout the course of the treatment. The beginning of the therapy was usually accompanied by fears and reluctance. Patients feared that the prescribed drugs might affect their personality and change their behavior towards others. This is contrasted by positive experiences within the later phase of the treatment. The management of the therapy was conducted with more confidence and autonomy. Self-regulation mechanisms, strategies of coping with the symptoms, communication and information were important mediators in this development.

Conclusions: It may be an important task for primary care doctors to address attitudes and perspectives of patients taking mood-modifiers and to recognize changes in patients' ideas about medicines. This may enhance patients' compliance and the concordance between patients and doctors. The use of knowledge about the biographic resources, which are used as device to deal with mood-modifying drugs, is not only limited to the Spanish migrants. Doctor-patient relationships could be improved by knowing more about the typical changes in the evaluations of mood-modifying drugs and how they alter the patients' decision-making processes.