

6.I. Workshop: Social Prescribing: what has been learned in developing evidence, what challenges and solutions?

Organised by: EUPHA-HP

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Social prescribing is seen as a mechanism for addressing the social determinants of health, preventing exacerbation of pre-existing diseases, reducing attendance in primary and emergency care and improving general population health and well-being. Social prescribing involves individuals being referred/self-referring to non-medical interventions run by a third-party organisation. Social prescribing has received widespread attention internationally; however, the evidence base to support social prescribing lacks rigour, and gaps remain. The complexity of social prescribing, in that it involves multiple referral routes, partners, pathways and outcomes, poses challenges for its evaluation and research. Researchers across Europe have developed different projects of research to address the challenges associated with evaluating social prescribing. Development of the evidence base for social prescribing is crucial in informing policy and public health systems to deliver effective interventions that contribute to individual, community and systemic outcomes. This workshop aims to share different approaches that have been taken across Europe to address issues in producing evidence base and share learning about the challenges and solutions that researchers have developed, specifically regarding research about implementation and evaluation of social prescribing. The workshop will be structured in a first part of presentations and the second part of open discussion with presenters and the audience. This workshop will present five papers which will address two key questions: 1. What have we learned about developing the evidence in social prescribing?; 2. What challenges have we experienced, and what solutions have we come up with? The short presentations will cover examples of social prescribing initiatives based on implementation and evaluation studies conducted in diverse European countries. Learning shared with the audience through the presentations will stimulate discussions around challenges with implementing and evaluating social prescribing. This workshop will inform the development of an overarching guidance on implementing social prescribing interventions, as well as identify parallel challenges in other areas of public health.

Key messages:

- Interactive session to discuss strategies for successful social prescribing projects addressing complex health issues that are relevant to stakeholders and for research to inform practice and policy.
- Collaboration with interdisciplinary stakeholders is crucial in developing the evidence base for social prescribing.