

Recent dissertations on health, culture and society

This section informs you about PhD dissertations in the broad field of medical anthropology, recently defended at Dutch and Belgian universities and about dissertations by Dutch or Belgian authors abroad. If you want to be included in this section, contact Erica van der Sijpt: e.vanderSijpt@uva.nl.

Marjolein Muys

Substance use among migrants. The case of Iranians in Belgium (192 pp.)

Defended at 06-05-2008
Ghent University

Summary — Research on substance use among newcomers in Western countries has long been dominated by the medical paradigm. Their drug consumption has been generally conceptualised as a means of self-medicating migration-related problems. However, this qualitative study among the Iranian community in Belgium shows that migrant substance use is more complex. Changing (social) circumstances after migration create new contexts of use. Through mechanisms of social exchange, people may get acquainted with new substances, new routes of ingestion or new motives for substance use. This book is based on participant observations and open interviews with 129 Iranian migrants in Belgium. It provides information on both pre- and postmigration patterns of use among this population, emphasising the importance of their own perspective (the insider's view). Covering a wide range of substances, focusing on opium, tobacco and alcohol, as consumed by Iranians from pre-Islamic times to present day, this book illustrates how different cultures have defined drugs across the ages.

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation (21,95 euro) has been published by ASP VUBPress in Brussels and can be ordered on their website:

(http://www.aspeditions.be/article.aspx?article_id= SUBSTA540Z)

Marianne Schoevers

“Hiding and seeking”: Health problems and problems in accessing health care of undocumented female immigrants in the Netherlands (222 pp.)

Defended at 08-02-2011
Radboud University Nijmegen

Summary (in Dutch) – Migrantenvrouwen zonder verblijfsvergunning (ongedocumenteerde of illegale vrouwen) bestaan niet in officiële statistieken. Hun gezondheidstoestand is onbekend. Zij mogen geen ziektekostenverzekering afsluiten. In dit promotieonderzoek zijn 100 ongedocumenteerde vrouwen geïnterviewd en medisch onderzocht. Zij blijken veel meer gezondheidsproblemen te hebben dan legale migrantenvrouwen en tegelijk veel minder gebruik te maken van de gezondheidszorg, hoewel ze recht hebben op alle medisch noodzakelijke zorg. Zij hebben zelden een huisarts en maken veel minder gebruik van verloskundige zorg en anticonceptie. Veel vrouwen zoeken geen hulp uit angst voor de politie of uit onwetendheid. Gezondheidswerkers weigeren soms vrouwen of eisen ten onrechte geld. Het daadwerkelijk verkrijgen van gezondheidszorg blijkt onvoorspelbaar en afhankelijk van de goodwill van gezondheidswerkers en vrijwilligers. Dit impliceert serieuze gezondheidsrisico's voor deze vrouwen en hun (ongeboren) kinderen maar ook voor de publieke gezondheid. Een actieve rol van hulpverleners om deze vrouwen te bereiken is noodzakelijk.

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation (€ 10) can be ordered by sending an e-mail to Marianne Schoevers (m.schoevers@chello.nl).

Doranne Hilarius

Patient-reported outcomes in daily clinical oncology practice. A tool for patient monitoring and quality of care assessment (136 pp.)

Defended at 10-06-2011
University of Amsterdam

Summary – Chemotherapy causes serious side effects that influence patients' quality of life. In this thesis, the author investigates whether 'Patient Reported Outcomes' (PRO) – results on the basis of patients' reports in questionnaires – offer insight into, and could improve, the quality of life of patients treated with chemotherapy. Her study among patients of an oncology ward shows that PROs improved the communication and enhanced the insight in the quality of life of patients, but did not contribute to its amelioration. The author further focuses on two severe side effects of chemotherapy: fatigue and nausea. With regard to

fatigue, she indicates that complaints are not necessarily followed by treatment. Rather, patients were advised to take it easy – despite official guidelines prescribing to stimulate the patient to remain active. With regard to nausea, she found striking differences between the complaints of young women and those of older men. Medical attempts to prevent nausea and vomiting do, however, not take into account the different characteristics of the patient.

Full-text is available on <http://dare.uva.nl/record/378074>.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Doranne Hilarius. (dhilarius@rkz.nl)

Johanna Debora Imelda

Mobilizing motherhood: a case study of two women's organizations advocating HIV prevention programs in Indonesia (192 pp.)

Defended at 14-09-2011
University of Amsterdam

Summary — This thesis examines the strategy of mobilizing motherhood through two Indonesian women's organizations – the *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (Family Welfare Movement, or PKK) and *Tim ODHA Perempuan* (Seropositive Women's Team, or TOP Support) – in the attempt to make prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) programs more socially acceptable. The promotion of PMTCT programs changes the image of HIV from the disease of 'women without morals' to a disease of devoted housewives, which has resulted in the better acceptance of HIV prevention programs in society. Notions of devoted wifehood and responsible motherhood have enabled PKK workers to gain trust – needed to bring pregnant women to participate in the mobile VCT service – and TOP Support members to project an innocent image of HIV-infection and thus to generate trust between seropositive mothers and within the community. In their involvement in the PMTCT pilot project, the PKK cadres and TOP Support members are able to convert the social capital derived from respected motherhood into social benefits and opportunities to access economic capital. Nevertheless, this study suggests that there are also significant challenges to the promotion of programs such as PMTCT for women through motherist organizations.

Full-text is available on <http://dare.uva.nl/record/391852>.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Nicole Schulp. (N.Schulp@uva.nl)

Laura van Alphen

Social integration of people with intellectual disabilities in neighbourhoods: Sitting on the fence (175 pp.)

Defended at 18-11-2011
University of Maastricht

Summary — In the Netherlands, people with intellectual disabilities (ID) are increasingly moving from segregated care in large institutions into small scale care facilities in regular neighbourhoods. This reflects a change in care policies during the last 40 years that progressively focus on the improvement of the quality of life by normalising the care environment around people with ID. Laura van Alphen discusses in her thesis the concerns about social integration of people with ID. These concerns mostly revolve around two issues: the opposition often expressed by (potential) neighbours about accepting people with ID in their neighbourhood, and the lack of interest in social contact with neighbours with ID after they have moved in. The underlying mechanisms responsible for the different social responses to anticipated contact with neighbours with ID, and the daily reality of interactions between neighbours with and without ID are illustrated in the thesis. Knowledge of these mechanisms helps in finding ways to improve neighbourhood social integration of people with ID.

Full-text is available on <http://arno.unimaas.nl/show.cgi?fid=23623>.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to the secretariat of the Gouverneur Kremers Centrum.
(gkc-secretariaat@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

Manja Bomhoff

Long-lived sociality: A cultural analysis of middle-class older persons' social lives in Kerala, India (239 pp.)

Defended at 24-11-2011
Leiden University

Summary — Long-Lived Sociality is an ethnographic account of the lives of older persons in Kerala. Through its detailed account of these highly educated, middle and upper class individuals, it challenges many popular and academic stereotypical notions of the old. Contrary to such preconceptions for instance, their lives turn out to be interdependent, not at all stagnant, extremely mobile and as far as possible actively shaped by the older persons themselves. Cultural notions about sociality are furthermore explored to understand how meaning is given to social and care relationships with others. These relations are informed

by strong expectations and a discourse that stresses the importance of duties. This discourse makes it possible for older persons to explicitly demand care when needed. The investigation of the possibilities and limitations of this discourse provides insights into the older persons' appreciation of their social lives and their overall wellbeing.

Full-text is available on <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/18139>.

The dissertation (€ 15) can be ordered by sending an e-mail to Manja Bomhoff. (manja_bomhoff@yahoo.com)

Erica van der Sijpt

Ambiguous ambitions. On pathways, projects, and pregnancy interruptions in Cameroon (301 pp.)

Defended at 30-11-2011
University of Amsterdam

Summary — This thesis illuminates the ways in which women in eastern Cameroon deal with, and make decisions around, pregnancy loss. Different forms of fertility interruptions – such as infertility, miscarriages, stillbirths, perinatal and neonatal deaths, but also induced abortions and fertility regulation – are pervaded by ambiguity in Cameroon. The cause, underlying intentions, and consequences of such incidents are often unclear. The author describes how women give meaning and direction to these contested happenings; she shows that women's reproductive decisions are related to their network of social relationships, their individual ambitions, and the workings of their material bodies. This complexity of reproductive decision-making is often ignored in scientific debates on fertility in Africa and sheds new light on common notions of reproductive intentionality, choice and control that inform much of the contemporary reproductive health discourse.

Full-text is not available online, but an overview of the contents is visible on <http://dare.uva.nl/record/397856>.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Erica van der Sijpt. (E.vanderSijpt@uva.nl)

Josien de Klerk

Being old in times of AIDS. Aging, caring and relating in northwest Tanzania (187 pp.)

Defended at 09-12-2011
University of Amsterdam

Summary — The HIV/AIDS epidemic in northwest Tanzania has profoundly shaped the experiences of growing old. Older men and women take on new care tasks, such as caring for orphaned grandchildren and nursing dying patients. Yet, at the same time, while older people grow older, their own old-age care becomes increasingly uncertain. Situating older people's stories in debates around kinship and relating this detailed ethnographic account captures the diverse experiences of growing old in the era of AIDS and shows how this process implies a tension between the increased necessity to forge relations of care and the confrontation with the aging body.

Full-text is available on <http://dare.uva.nl/record/400079>.

The dissertation has been published by the Africa Studies Centre in Leiden and can be ordered for € 15 on the ASC website.
(<http://www.ascleiden.nl/Publications/>)

Achilles Ssewaya

Sustaining adherence to antiretroviral therapy among HIV/AIDS patients in Uganda (219 pp.)

Defended at 14-12-2011
University of Amsterdam

Summary — This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors facilitating and constraining ART adherence in resource-poor settings. It seeks answers to a complex argument that adherence to ART in Uganda is an outcome of a reciprocal relationship between biomedical factors and structural factors. The author uses combined methods in a cross-sectional and retrospective longitudinal research design, and targets both an urban-based facility (Mbuya) and a rural based facility (Kayunga). The results firstly show that 90% of the HIV patients took 95% of the prescribed doses over a 3-year-period preceding the study, resulting in immunological and clinical improvement. The type, location, and constellation of healthcare services do not substantially alter adherence outcomes. Second, adherence to ART is not a discrete event but an outcome of a complex process involving interrelated therapeutic activities that precede and culminate into the medication dose itself. Third, results indicate a weak appearance of biomedical barriers and a predominance of structural factors. Fourth, adherence is an outcome of complex interactions between individual factors, treatment efficacy, health facility innovations, and social support systems. This study proposes strategies for sustaining ART adherence in resource-poor settings, as well as a conceptual framework and theoretical concerns arising from the study.

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Achilles Ssewaya.
(assewaya@yahoo.com)

Margaret Kyakuwa

Going the extra mile. An ethnography of care-giving and care designing among nurses in Uganda (301 pp.).

Defended at 14-12-2011
University of Amsterdam

Summary — This thesis describes the author's research on the role of HIV-positive nurses in two HIV/AIDS treatment centres in Uganda. It describes how the identity of the nurses changes when their personal lives and social environments get affected by the AIDS epidemic and treatment with antiretroviral therapy (ART). The author also describes how the disease influences the nurses' relations of care. Nurses who work in a public clinic often choose to keep their status secret, but they are also better nurses due to their personal experiences with the disease. Instead of clinging to ethical codes of objectivity and distance, they value relations based on trust, interdependence, creativity and cooperation. The thesis argues against the classic divide between patient and care-giver roles, and instead proposes to use new techniques of investigation that acknowledge the interdependency between the two roles.

Full-text is available on <http://dare.uva.nl/en/record/400078>

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Margaret Kyakuwa.
(margaretkyakuwa@yahoo.com)