

# Enhancing Primary Care with Social Prescribing: Insights from FIMMG Naples

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## Introduction

This research is a collaborative effort that investigates the integration and impact of social prescribing within Italy's primary care framework. It specifically focuses on the joint initiatives between the Italian Federation of General Practitioners (FIMMG) in Naples, and local community third sector entities.

Social prescribing involves healthcare professionals referring patients to non-clinical services to address social determinants of health. It is a relatively new practice in Italy and is not as well-organized as in other European countries. Eligible patients typically receive home care services, but these do not include social activities that promote learning new skills or fostering social connections (Donata Kurpas et al., 2023).

During the first Salutequità Summit in December 2023, major healthcare stakeholders in Italy discussed reducing healthcare disparities. The incorporation of social care into health programs emerged as a significant topic. One of the proposed strategies for improving equitable access to healthcare involves revitalizing national health programs, integrating them with social care, and coordinating with regional entities (Salutequità, 2023). Thus, social prescribing is a promising approach that should be developed to advance this process, promoting holistic, community-based methods for health and well-being.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on SP in healthcare systems, providing specific insights into the Italian context. The study highlights the role of primary care networks and professional bodies like FIMMG Naples in facilitating SP. The findings underscore SP's potential to transform primary care by promoting a holistic approach to health that includes social determinants. Through a detailed literature analysis combining academic and non-academic literature sources, this study develops an outline of SP's key features, which are fundamental to mapping SP Italian projects. This research's innovation lies in its focus on a very recent SP model, with no prior studies applied to the Italian context. Thus, the results serve as a starting point for future studies in SP in Italy.

## Main Issue or Research Question

How can integrating social prescribing into Italy's primary care improve patient outcomes and healthcare efficiency by addressing social determinants of health?

### Major Working Hypotheses:

1. Effective Integration: FIMMG's spearheading of integrating SP into the primary care framework in Naples will improve patient outcomes by addressing non-clinical health determinants.
2. Key Role of FIMMG: FIMMG's involvement is crucial in promoting and implementing SP across Naples, serving as a model for other contexts.
3. Enhanced Healthcare Delivery: SP will improve healthcare delivery efficiency and effectiveness, reducing the burden on clinical services by addressing patients' social needs.
4. Challenges and Mitigation: Identifying challenges faced in integrating SP and proposing practical solutions will be essential for successful implementation and scalability.

### Methodology and Sources of Information:

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis:

- Quantitative Data: Analysis of patient health outcomes, healthcare utilisation rates, and socio-economic data
- Qualitative Data: Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with general practitioners, third-sector workers, patients, and healthcare administrators in Naples.
- Secondary Sources: A literature review on SP practices and outcomes in other countries, mainly the UK, including academic and non-academic literature.

Data will be collected from healthcare records, surveys, and interviews conducted in collaboration with FIMMG and other healthcare providers involved in the pilot programs.

### Relevant Findings and Research Contribution

The findings will underscore the potential of SP to transform primary care by promoting a holistic approach to health. The research will highlight the pivotal role of FIMMG Naples in facilitating SP and provide insights specific to the Italian context. By focusing on a recent SP model, this study will contribute to the literature and serve as a foundation for future research.

### Conclusion:

This study aims to inspire future strategies for expanding Social Prescribing across Italy, leading to better health outcomes and a more effective healthcare system. The case study of FIMMG Naples serves as a pioneering model for integrating SP into primary care, showcasing its feasibility and benefits in addressing complex health and social needs.

## Bibliography

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