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SCHEDA SINTESI – OSSERVATORIO DELLA CULTURA DEL DONO DEL SANGUE

The “Observatory for the Culture of Blood Donation” has been activated in October, 2006, by the AVIS National Council and it is an organization with the goal to:

- help the spread of the culture of blood donation among all population classes;
- stimulate the scientific research on this topic, including not only medical but also sociologic, anthropologic and educational contributions;
- organize conferences, seminars and training courses on the topic of the awakening and the research in the field of blood donation, and addressed both to political or medical authorities and to Italian schools or universities;
- to establish a continuous communication with the communities of resident immigrants, so to increase among them the number of regular donations. For this purpose, the involvement of the associative responsables and of the medical authorities of the foreign countries of origin of many immigrants in Italy is also pursued.

This Observatory is the first one of this kind in Europe in the context of blood donation, making Avis a reference also in terms of innovation and research in the scientific field.

Since more than ten years, due to the growing presence of immigrants in the country, Avis has put in action dedicated awakening campaigns, aimed not only at the practical inclusion in the donation process but also at the scientific research in the field of the anthropologic meaning of the blood donation in different cultures. From this perspective, the blood donation of immigrant citizens is considered an enrichment, not only for the hemo-transfusional resources, but also for the possible common understanding and sharing of values among people that simply acknowledge themselves in the role of donors.

For reaching these objectives, the Observatory organized:

- a series of actions and projects to the not-at-all absolute categories of blood, illness, health, donation, solidarity, and what else characterises today the free and spontaneous activity of the associations that work in this field;
- a series of actions aimed at the active involvement of immigrant communities in the illness prevention and healthcare education, in the solidarity and sharing of basic values of a multicultural and multiethnic society like the contemporary Italy.

This is documented in the recently published book *L'altro in me. Dono del sangue e immigrazione fra culture, pratiche e identità* (by Annamaria Fantauzzi), that collects contributions from academic and associative experts and the stories of donors and medical doctors that have been involved in this new dialogue form between different cultures.

Since the campaign “Grazie, prego” – based on an agreement between AVIS and Livia Turco, at the time in charge for the Ministry of Health - was launched, and the start up of the Observatory in October 2006, many Avis offices started to have contacts with immigrant’s communities. Some of the Avis offices have indeed showed interests on this topic even before these events: for example:

- AVIS Toscana (Prato, Livorno, Firenze) made activities together with some immigrant communities (from Senegal, Romania, Albania), also in the form of scientific researches (both sociological and anthropological) on the symbolic representation and the socio-cultural dynamics that are linked to blood donation;
- the first blood donation organized by the islamic community in cooperation with Avis Torino in 2005, followed by similar initiatives in the Big Mosque in Roma;
- the redesign and update of all the procedures for the selection and preservation of the blood donor, in cooperation with S.I.M.T.I., by the translation of the documentation, the involvement of cultural mediators for supporting the communication (not only linguistically but also culturally);
- the start of many research activities, conferences and seminars where the immigrant communities have played a key role in the promotion of blood donation.

All this marked the starting point of an exchange also with the countries of origin of the immigrants. Avis has agreed on co operations aimed at increasing the culture of free, periodical and volunteer-based blood donation. The protocols recently signed with AMDS of Morocco and with the Lega of Romanians of Italy, as well as the institution of AVAS in Argentina are just some examples.

Many other activities, organized by regional, district or local Avis sites may be cited. They deserve a positive judgement for demonstrating that, also by the blood donation, a common path in the direction of reciprocal awareness and understanding between natives and immigrant citizens is possible.

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