

Accompanied child irregular migrants who arrive to Spain in small boats: Experiences and health needs

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The European Union is the preferred destination of child irregular migrants arrived from northern Africa, who risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea in small boats. Accompanied Child Irregular Migrants (AChIMs) are exposed to physical and psychological risk. The objective of our study is to describe and understand the experiences and health needs of AChIMs who arrive to Spain in small boats, through the testimony of adults who accompany them on the journey. A qualitative study, based on Gadamer's hermeneutic phenomenology, was performed. After obtaining approval from the Ethics and Research Committee, we conducted in-depth interviews on 32 adults who travelled with AChIMs. Two main themes emerged: (1) The journey a child should never have to take, with the subthemes 'AChIMs as a paradigm of vulnerability?' and 'Crossing the sea, playing with death?' and (2) Characterising emergency care to AChIMs, with the subthemes 'Prioritising specific care?', 'Identifying high-risk situations?' and 'The detaining of innocent children?'. AChIMs, along with adults, risk their lives in such a dangerous and perilous journey, therefore, finding out about their experiences may contribute to improving the treatment of their specific health needs during the phases of rescue and emergency care. © 2019, © 2019 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

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