

WACP SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

The F. Minkowska Center *Paris*



I. History of the Françoise Minkowska Center

During the years that followed the end of the Second World War, many thousands of refugees immigrated to France from displaced persons camps' in central Europe.

The hardships suffered by these people throughout the war years and then in displaced persons camps after the war ended, the death and disappearance of family members, their difficulties in adaptation in an unfamiliar country whose language they didn't speak - all these traumatic circumstances contributed to anxiety, depression and other psychiatric symptoms and illnesses experienced by many of these immigrants. Even in the largest French cities, including Paris, there were no medical or social support services available, or organized specifically to serve their needs.

Nevertheless, in November 1951, a medical and educational consultation service designed to serve the needs of immigrant families opened on the premises of the Tomkine community free clinic in Paris, in the 9th 'arrondissement' (ward).

The Tomkine clinic was developed and run by Dr. Eugene Minkowski, in collaboration with Dr. Fursay, a Polish refugee, and included the services of a clinical psychologist.

The clinic's services were designed primarily for children, but adults could also be accommodated. Screening and treatment sessions were conducted by the clinic staff in French, German, Russian and Polish. But this initiative received no direct financial aid from government sources at any level. The Social Service Agency for Immigrant Aid (S.S.A.E.) was able to support some of the cost of this care of refugee patients, as long as they were referred by social workers to Dr. Minkowski and Dr. Fursay .

Since 1985, the operating expenses for the Center have been provided by the French National Fund for Health Insurance.

In 1964, the Center inaugurated a consultation service for Spanish-speaking immigrants to France, followed in 1965 by a consultation service for Portuguese-speaking people. In addition, the original post-WW2 consultation service for Central European refugees was expanded to provide care for more recent immigrants from Yugoslavia.

As the Clinic extended its reach to immigrants from all over Europe, so too the number of patient contacts increased. For example, in 1971, 1543 medical interventions were carried out by the Center physicians.

Another major extension of Center outreach occurred in 1972, with the inauguration of consultation services for immigrants from North African countries of the Maghreb then, in 1975, the scope of services was expanded again, to serve the needs of people from countries of sub-Saharan Africa, as well as those from South-East Asian countries.

Also in 1975, a separate consultation center for Portuguese-speaking people was created in Essone, a Paris suburb where a large number of

Portuguese immigrants lived. In 1979 consultation services were added for Turkish immigrants.

Dr Eugène Minkowski died in November 1972. His son, Prof. Alexandre Minkowski, followed in his father's footsteps as President of the board of directors for the Association. The general assembly of the Association, decided in October 1973 to change the name of the Association to "Françoise and Eugène Minkowski Association for the Mental Health of Immigrants".

In April 1999, Minkowska Center moved in to larger premises in the 17th arrondissement, offering improved facilities for consultation, clinical service and staff communication.

II. Clinical Activities of the Françoise Minkowska Center

- 1) It welcomes immigrants and refugees living in the Paris region, as part of the publicly funded medical and social service system, with a public health approach, and with a clinical medical anthropology perspective. Service providers are available, who are familiar with the cultural characteristics of the specific immigrant groups targeted and speak their languages;
- 2) Medical, psychological and social multi-disciplinary and multi-linguistic teams welcome the patients (children and adults) from several geographical and cultural areas: Central and Eastern Europe, Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-East Asia, and Turkey.

III. Training and research activities of the Françoise Minkowska Center

- 1 The Center organizes a weekly lecture and seminar series for health, social service and social science professional staff and students;
- 2 It also offers ongoing training in clinical medical anthropology, intercultural

management, intercultural mediation, transcultural psychiatry, and cultural resilience;

- 3 The Center sponsors regional, national and international conferences related to immigration and acculturation;
- 4 The Center has a department of research which organizes monthly seminars on acculturation process, public health and migration, offers clinical supervision to psychologists and health professionals concerned with culture and psychiatry and manages dissemination of information about the Center through "Mental health and cultures".

[Http://www.minkowska.com](http://www.minkowska.com)