An Assessment of the Prevalence and Degree of Psychosocial Trauma in Syrian Refugees in Arizona

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Results

- Overall prevalence of PTSD in Syrian refugees was found to be 9/50, approximately 18%.
- There was no association found between age and PTSD score > 2.5.
- There no association found between sex and PTSD score > 2.5.
- Refugees who came from Damascus were 5.56x (1.04, 29.6) more likely to have a PTSD score > 2.5 compared to all other cities.
- There were no associations found between the patient demographic data and overall PTSD score.
- The odds ratios for patients who experienced trauma and torture are significantly higher than all other questionnaire responses.

Conclusion

The prevalence of PTSD in Syrian refugees in Arizona was found to be 18%. Though this study did not have sufficient power, this suggests the need for improved behavioral health screening in this population. Participants who answered yes to trauma and torture questions on the HTQ were also more likely to have a high overall PTSD score. Thus, comprehensive behavioral health screening that is sensitive to symptoms of trauma as a result of torture should be integrated in refugee health screening.

Materials and Methods

This study is a cross-sectional survey of Syrian refugees located in the U.S. state of Arizona. Participants were recruited via random sampling from a previously compiled database. Participants were of Syrian origin, qualified for the UNHCR definition of a refugee, and were at least 7 years of age. Participants were excluded if they left Syria prior to the onset of the conflict in March 2011. Informed consent and voluntary participation was obtained from 50 respondents. Participants were surveyed using the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire*. Univariate logistic regression was used to ascertain the odds of PTSD score >2.5 relative to survey characteristics. Multivariate linear regression was used to ascertain the mean difference of the raw scores relative to survey characteristics.

* PTSD criteria valid for adults and children >/=7 years.

Summary

The prevalence of PTSD among the population surveyed in this study was much higher than the percentage of those referred to behavioral health services (18% compared to 2.3%), though the power in this study is not sufficient to discern this difference to be statistically significant.

Acknowledgements

To the Syrian people, who truly embody the definition of resilience.