Psychological trauma in refugees

Preliminary demographic data from a sample of 23 psychiatric evaluations of refugees arriving in Dresden, Germany this year are presented in a commentary in Molecular Psychiatry this week. The data show that 50% of the individuals in the sample who were victims of war, forced migration and torture, meet the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The German government expect approximately one million refugees from Syria, Iraq, Eritrea and surrounding countries to arrive this year. In Dresden, where approximately 1,700 refugees are currently based, medical care in the city has been extended to include six hours per week of psychiatric help as of 10th August. Preliminary data from the first two weeks of assessments are presented in this commentary.

Enrico Ullmann, Julio Licinio and colleagues highlight that there have been challenges in providing psychiatric care including the lack of interpreters and unsuitable premises for collecting psychiatric clinical data. They suggest that while all refugees experience trauma and stress, some are more vulnerable to developing mental illness than others. Given the reality of limited resources the authors recommend that mental health care should be particularly focused on those who are more likely to develop PTSD and major depression. The authors suggest that children and youths under 18 years old are among individuals most in need of protection and have the greatest need for psychiatric attention.

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ARTICLE DETAILS

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