

BEST PRACTICES OF ADDRESSING PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS OF REFUGEES

Els Rommes
Radboud University
Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Background:

Refugees are underrepresented in mental care while they are likely to have more mental problems. To remedy this discrepancy, various authors offer frameworks to provide more inclusive care, amongst others by training counsellors to be culturally competent, offer cultural safety or using a cultural humility framework (Kirmayer, 2012). Which elements do successful counsellors use and how do they work out in their everyday practice?

Issues of focus: What do counsellors specialized in refugee care do to improve the accessibility and acceptability of psychosocial care for refugees?

Methods: During 15 in-depth interviews, psychosocial (mostly based in the Netherlands) counsellors specialized in refugees' needs went through various case studies of their clients. These case studies were analysed for specificities in the needs of refugees and how they were addressed by the counsellors.

Potential outcomes: My analysis of interviews with psychosocial counsellors specialized in care for refugees shows that to reach refugees, psychosocial counselling should be accessible, bridge cultural differences, offer holistic services and provide safety. Accessibility (for which telecounselling, particularly in times of COVID, could be a good tool) means being pro-active and reaching out by going where refugees are, be flexible across time and distance and speak the same language. Bridging means to act as a cultural broker by translating cultures and systems of home and host country. Holistic means to involve all practical and organizational circumstances instead of only focussing on individual mental elements. Providing a safe space means providing anonymity, as well as offering recognition and a feeling of being at home.

Discussion: I will discuss why specifically for (which) refugees these adjustments are needed, and for which of these adjustments matching (Zane 2014) of psychosocial counsellors may be recommended.

Full List of Authors
Els Rommes

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify specific needs of refugees in psychosocial care;
2. Analyze for which of these needs counsellors from the country of origin are crucial.

References

- Kirmayer, L.J. (2012) Rethinking cultural competence. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 49(2): 149-164
- Zane, N., & Ku, H. (2014). Effects of ethnic match, gender match, acculturation, cultural identity, and face concern on self-disclosure in counseling for Asian Americans. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 5(1), 66–74.