

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Refugee mental health literacy

Dr Shameran Slewa-Younan from the School of Medicine with Associate Professor Jonathan Mond from University of Canberra, Professor Anthony Jorm from University of Melbourne together with Dr Mitchell Smith and Ms Diana Milosevic from NSW Refugee Health Service have been awarded a UWS Research Partnership grant to investigate the mental health literacy of a refugee community regarding post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

'Resettled refugees are a particularly vulnerable group', says Dr Slewa-Younan. 'They have very high levels of mental health problems, in particular, trauma-related disorders such as PTSD, but a very low uptake of mental health care. Evidence suggests that poor "mental health literacy", namely, poor knowledge and understanding of the nature and treatment of mental health problems is a major factor in low or inappropriate treatment-seeking among individuals with mental health problems. Efforts are needed to identify specific aspects of "mental health literacy" in different demographic subgroups and to use this information to develop health promotion programs. Currently, virtually nothing is known about the mental health literacy of resettled refugees in Australia and this lack of information is hindering the development of culturally appropriate health promotion programs.'

The research team will employ a survey approach to find out about specific aspects of mental health literacy believed to be problematic in resettled refugee communities. Additionally, self-report measures of PTSD, general psychological distress, health-related quality of life, and a check-list of common, chronic medical conditions as well and socio-demographic information will be collected. Participants will be Iraqi refugees who had a similar exposure to war-related conflict resettled in Western Sydney.



The findings from this study should provide an understanding of how resettled refugees view, understand and respond to trauma-related mental health problems. It will lay the foundation for the development and implementation of health promotion programs - both prevention and early intervention - designed to improve mental health literacy at the individual, family and community levels.

Project Title: Mental health literacy in a resettled refugee community in New South Wales: Paving the way for mental health promotion in vulnerable communities

Funding has been set at: \$4,500

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