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MANIFESTATION AND SYMPTOMATOLOGY OF DEPRESSION IN REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

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WHO has predicted that in 2020 depression will be the second most important cause of disability.

Studies focusing on cross- cultural aspects of depression have increased during the last decade, and depression has been studied cross-culturally regarding their prevalence and symptomatology.

The WHO study assessing depression across cultures reported a core symptomatology across the participating centres, but with certain differences in the ranking of problems in e.g. patients from non - industrialised nations somatic symptoms often dominate.

Furthermore, there is increasing focus on the impact of migration on depressive illness. Depressive syndromes are clearly very common in migrants, and are probably the most frequent mental disorders in people who move to other countries. Refugees and asylum seekers are subjected to significant social and psychological stress and are more vulnerable. For scientific purposes it is vital though to differentiate between the different aspects of influence, for example the frequency of disorders and problems in treatment. Results of studies on increased psychological morbidity in migrants do not indicate whether increased vulnerability is associated with a migration background, or with acculturation problems in the host country due to cultural differences, or a combination of both factors. Both culture and migration-specific factors, as well as the level of integration into the host country, determine the conflicting arguments.

The presentation will provide an overview of the burden of depression in relation to culture, differences in symptomatology, the role of migration and other circumstantial factors having an impact on the appearance and outcome of the disorder.