History of Persecution and Health Outcomes Among US Refugees

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ABSTRACT: Our goal was to describe the forms of persecution reported by adult refugees in the U.S. and the relationships between persecution and health status among this population. Data were derived from the 2003 New Immigrant Survey, a representative sample of new U.S. lawful permanent residents. Major depression, impairment in daily activities due to pain, poor self-reported health, and declining health were described for refugees who had and had not reported persecution prior to arrival in the U.S. Health status was also examined for refugees who reported different forms of persecution. Half of refugees (46.7 %) in this sample reported that they or an immediate family member had been persecuted. One in three persecuted refugees (31.8 %) reported both incarceration and physical punishment. Major depression, pain-related impairment, poor health, and declining health were twice as common among persecuted refugees than among non persecuted refugees. Notably, despite these adverse experiences the majority of persecuted refugees did not report poor health outcomes.

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