

## H. REACTIONS OF ARAB-AMERICAN GROUPS TO THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 TERRORIST ATTACKS

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### BACKGROUND

Ethnic minorities who are not present at a disaster area may experience severe secondary posttraumatic stress reactions. We assessed the immediate effects of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on Arab Americans in southeast Michigan.

### METHOD

We administered a questionnaire to 518 Arab-American adults from different Arabic national backgrounds who lived in southeast Michigan. The survey was conducted within three weeks of the tragic events and asked about their reactions to the terrorist attacks. The questionnaire was based on DSM-IV criteria of acute traumatic disorder.

### RESULTS

More than 54% of the respondents reported feeling sad, shocked, or hav-

ing intrusive thoughts. More than 34% felt afraid, angry, recalled bad memories, or felt like they were dreaming. More than 24% felt confused, cried, had sleep difficulties, or had difficulty concentrating. Findings showed that females were more traumatized than males. The study also showed a correlation between an increase in traumatization and an increase in TV exposure. In addition, about 28% of the respondents sought help from various sources to cope with their distress.

### CONCLUSION

After the September 11 terrorist attacks, Arab Americans in southeast Michigan had substantial stress reactions. Mental health centers should be prepared to help minority groups resolve posttraumatic stress disorder in order to prevent chronicity or the development of co-morbid disorders.

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