

## SECTION VIII. MENTAL HEALTH

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### A. OVERVIEW

Researchers from various professional backgrounds such as health psychology, behavioral medicine, clinical psychology, social work, psychiatry and nursing have long noted the interwoven facets of the physical and mental health of individuals from various ethnic origins. In this section, we present articles and abstracts pertinent to mental health issues affecting Arab Americans. Recent efforts to include Arab Americans among the ethnic groups studied have resulted in a better understanding of the links between their physical and mental health. Clinicians have also begun considering how best to treat the whole person in their mental health treatment protocols for Arab Americans.

The first paper in this session addresses the epidemiology of Arab Americans in publicly funded substance abuse treatment programs and was written by a team of researchers from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Using admissions data from Michigan publicly funded substance abuse treatment programs, Arfken et al conducted a comparison study of intake data on various ethnic groups including Arab Americans. Given the historically high concentration of Christian (eg, Iraqi Chaldean) and Muslim Arab Americans in the metropolitan Detroit area and the prohibition of drug and alcohol use by strictly practicing Muslims, the researchers wanted to describe patterns of substance abuse in this community in order to help structure future outreach, prevention and treatment efforts.

The second paper examines physical and mental health symptoms in im-

migrants from Iraq and compares those who immigrated before the 1991 Gulf War with those who immigrated afterward. Led by Jamil, this team of researchers designed questions to obtain data about the participants' health status both before and after their immigration and administered the questionnaires in the participants' native languages. Participants who were unable to read the questionnaires were administered the questionnaires verbally. Data were collected on 29 physical and mental health medical conditions (eg, sleep apnea, chronic headaches, anxiety and depression) and were examined by participant age, sex, marital status, and specific ethnic background.

An article by Kira et al addresses the physical and mental health of refugees from Iraq, with particular focus on the traumatic experiences involved in the etiology of their symptoms. The available literature on refugees, including articles from Iraq, has suggested that this group suffers from elevated rates of physical and mental health problems. The primary objective of Kira's research was to refine the description of the trauma experienced by these refugees and explore the potential causes of their health problems. In addition to considering the demographic characteristics of their sample, Kira et al measured cumulative trauma experiences, media exposure to the war in Iraq, family involvement in war, backlash after September 11, 2001, and perceived discrimination. They examined the relationship between these variables and various diagnostic measurement tools that assist in identifying posttraumatic stress disorders and various other mental and physical health disorders.

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The presentation on hope and well-being of refugees from Iraq introduces the potential promise of hope theory within medical settings for the treatment of individuals with histories of trauma. As part of a larger project on the physical and mental health of immigrants from Iraq, Hakim Larson and colleagues administered measures of hope, depression, anxiety and trauma severity to refugees who were seeking or receiving mental

health treatment. Hope was made operational in accordance with Snyder's definitions, which place emphasis on the person's belief in his or her own agency and capacity to generate plans of action to accomplish personal goals.

The final paper in this section examines the psychosocial rehabilitation treatment approach for survivors of torture. This treatment is currently used by mental health professionals at

the ACCESS Center for Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Torture Survivors. Farrag and a team of clinical researchers examined pre- and post-treatment measures of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder in participants who were survivors of torture.

Additional mental health-related articles addressing specific disorders, as presented at the conference, can be found in Sections II, III, IV, and VI.