



**OPERATIONAL
RESEARCH
SNAPSHOT**

Improved Care for Migrant Torture Survivors in Italy's Reception System



Many refugees and migrants reaching Europe have suffered torture and require specialized care. For Italian reception centers and health services, identifying torture survivors poses a major challenge.

More than 180,000 migrants and refugees arrived in Italy in 2016 alone, and many faced torture and persecution in their countries of origin or on their journeys. They require access to specialized medical and psychological care, as well as legal and social support to prevent severe physical and mental health complications.

Since 2015, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has been running a clinic with specialized services for torture survivors in Rome, helping to identify, treat, and refer patients to the appropriate care providers.

This qualitative study conducted by MSF and local partners interviewed clinicians, psychologists, and reception staff in Rome's reception system and investigated how they identify and manage torture survivors.





Staff in reception centers reported a general lack of awareness and insufficient standardized procedures to reliably identify torture survivors. Official guidelines were often little known or not trusted.



Limited human resources and a lack of expertise in identifying survivors of torture make providing care challenging. As specialized services are often overstretched, identified victims face long waiting times.



Reception staff also reported the insufficient availability of cultural mediators in their centers. They play a key role in overcoming language and cultural barriers, and help build trust with survivors of torture.



IMPLEMENTATION

The study highlights a clear need for targeted capacity building on the identification and management of torture survivors, and for culturally-adapted competencies and approaches for migrants and refugees.

The study findings and recommendations were shared with local care providers and representatives of the Italian Ministry of Health, and are planned to be presented at a regional conference on migrant health.

Original Study: Spissu, C; De Maio, G; Van den Bergh, R; Ali, E; Venables, E; Burtscher, D; Ponthieu, A; Ronchetti, M; Mostarda, N; Zamatto, F (2018) "It never happened to me, so I don't know if there are procedures": identification and case management of torture survivors in the reception and public health system of Rome, Italy. Torture.

Pictures: Alessandro Penso/MAPS; Sara Creta/MSF. Persons depicted are not victims of torture.



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