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RESIGNATION SYNDROME IN REFUGEE CHILDREN IN SWEDEN

Elisabeth Hultcrantz¹ and Anne-Liis von Knorring²

¹University of Linköping, Sweden

²University of Uppsala, Sweden

In Sweden hundreds of psychologically traumatized refugee children have been affected by a longstanding disorder: "resignation syndrome" during the last two decades. The onset can be acute in connection with a negative decision in their asylum process or as a result of a progressive depression during the long waiting time for a decision. The first symptom is the child's resistance to eat and drink and at the same time he/she becomes mute. Within days the general mobility is lost and so also the sensibility for cold and pain. The children usually come to hospital in this state with no formal or emotional contact. Later, hydration tube-feeding in the home is initiated. The authors have now explored about 50 of these children and followed their disease and the recovery. After bringing security into the family, usually with a residency permit, the children slowly start to recover after 1-3 months and are back in school after 6 months to one year. Depressive symptoms are common long after "recovery". Most children come from ethnic minorities in the former Soviet union or Balkan. The reason for leaving their country has been trauma occurring to family members, which the later sick child has witnessed. All children have such a previous trauma from their home country and many have developed PTSD. The acute threat of deportation back to the place of the trauma re-activates their unbearable fear and stress and causes the catatonia like condition. The presentation will describe the syndrome and discuss why most of the cases are seen in Sweden.

Biography

Elisabeth Hultcrantz completed her MD/PhD in 1978 from Uppsala University and Postdoctoral studies from Kresge Hearing Research Institute, Ann Arbor, MI, USA in 1981. She has been Professor and Head of ENT at Linköping's University, and Senior Professor since 2010. She has published about 100 papers in reputed journals and has been serving as an Editorial Board Member. Since 2008, she has been working for Doctors of the World, Sweden with special interest in children with resignation syndrome (RS). She is conducting ongoing research with Child Psychiatrist, Prof. Anne-Liis von Knorring about aetiology and recovery from RS.

elisabeth.hultcrantz@liu.se