

PRESS RELEASE

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Chronic diseases more prevalent in natives than in immigrants and returned refugees

ZAGREB – A study conducted in a war-affected area of Croatia showed significant differences in health status of the inhabitants, dependant on their migrations during the 1991-1995 war. Refugees from neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina less often suffered from chronic diseases than native inhabitants.

The study was conducted in Komarevo village, in the area of intense military operations during the war. The researchers collected the data from the medical files of 1,319 patients registered in Komarevo family medicine practice. According to their migration status, participants were divided into three groups: natives (those that never left the village), immigrants (refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina) and returned refugees (those that left the village during the war, but returned afterwards). The results of the study showed that the prevalence of chronic diseases was highest among natives, lower among returned refugees and the lowest among immigrants.

Three groups differed in morbidity despite the fact that all of them had been exposed to war stress. “A possible explanation of a lower disease burden among immigrants was that the healthies survived the war and immigrated to Croatia”, pointed out the authors of the study published in the *Croatian Medical Journal*.

Although this epidemiological study was performed on a rather small patient population, it gives a unique model of comparing the health of three groups of people that survived a war, but differed in their migrations during the war. The results of the study should be kept in mind in the approach to health care of war-affected populations.

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