

Between Trauma and Treatment: Access to Mental Health Services Among Displaced Ukrainians in Canada

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Abstract

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army in 2022 resulted in a major humanitarian crisis across the world, forcing 6,752,000 million Ukrainian citizens to flee their homes. In response, the Canadian government created a federal program to allow displaced Ukrainians to settle in Canada. Between March 17, 2022, and April 1, 2024, nearly 300,000 Ukrainians arrived in Canada under this program. Many of these displaced persons require mental health services, as they face both pre-existing conditions—such as high rates of suicide and alcohol use disorder—and newly developed conditions resulting from war trauma, including witnessing deaths, family separation, and sexual violence. However, immigrants in Canada face multiple barriers in accessing mental health care, ranging from stigma and low mental health literacy to limited service availability, long wait times, and financial constraints. Without proper access to mental health support, unmanaged conditions may contribute to homelessness, addiction, and further strain on healthcare systems. The purpose of this study is to develop a profound understanding of the experiences of displaced Ukrainians in accessing mental health services in Canada using the Narrative Inquiry methodology. This method allows researchers to gain a detailed and nuanced understanding of participants' experiences in consideration of their unique social, historical, and economic contexts. Four participants will be invited to participate in this study to compare their experiences through narrative analysis. The insights gained will be valuable for healthcare professionals and policymakers seeking to improve mental health service accessibility for this and similar populations.

Biography

Kristina Tsvygun is a Master of Nursing student in the thesis stream at Toronto Metropolitan University with a focus on Leadership in Healthcare Policy and Education. She is a Registered Nurse practicing in Critical Care at North York General Hospital, where she also holds leadership roles on unit-specific committees dedicated to improving the quality of care. Kristina's research interests include enhancing healthcare accessibility for vulnerable populations, with a particular focus on migrant and refugee health and well-being. Kristina also serves on the Board of Directors for a non-profit organization, supporting the integration of recent refugees into Canadian society.