



### ABSTRACT FORM

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<b>Title of the contribution/Titolo del contributo</b>	Post-traumatic stress disorder with psychotic symptoms among asylum seekers attending the mental health clinic of Médecins Sans Frontières in Lesvos, Greece		
<b>Objectives/Obiettivi</b>	<p>This study showed that psychotic symptoms associated with PTSD, and related to previous traumatic events, were prevalent in the population of asylum seekers on Lesvos Island attending MSF clinic; all patients improved in a few sessions through the use of a multidisciplinary approach and early interventions. The authors emphasize the importance of awareness of this clinical manifestation of PTSD and of rapidly distinguishing between reactive and chronic psychotic symptomatology. Moreover, the study findings indicated that an extremely vulnerable population, with a high degree of suicidal ideation, was administratively held in a containment camp in Lesvos, which offers limited or even no options for adequate protection and support of these individuals; <b>an increased capacity to better host such individuals should urgently be put in place, and the improvement of support and protection of human rights of asylum seekers as well.</b></p>		

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# Post-traumatic stress disorder with psychotic symptoms among asylum seekers attending the mental health clinic of Médecins Sans Frontières in Lesvos, Greece

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## ABBREVIATIONS

GAF score: Global Assessment of Functioning

ICD 10: International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10<sup>th</sup> Revision, WHO version for, Geneva 2016

DSM-V: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition

MDT : Multi-disciplinary team

MSF: Médecins Sans Frontières

NGO : Non-governmental organisation

PTSD: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

PTSD+: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder with psychotic symptoms

PTSD-SP: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder with secondary psychosis

SSRI: Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor

WHO: World Health Organization

## ABSTRACT

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**Background:** Migrants and asylum seekers are particularly susceptible to severe and complex mental health disorders because of traumatic events and adverse circumstances before, during, or after their migratory journey. Here, we describe two cohorts of asylum seekers with PTSD in presence and in absence of psychotic symptoms, to better understand this complex symptomatology and propose ways forward for its management.

**Methods:** A retrospective quantitative study using routine programme data of asylum seekers diagnosed with PTSD with/without psychotic symptoms in a Médecins Sans Frontières mental health programme in Lesbos, Greece.

**Results:** 171 patients were included in the study: 44% with PTSD (as primary diagnosis), and 56% with PTSD combined with psychotic symptoms (PTSD+). Cases of PTSD+ tended to present earlier after arrival on Lesbos (72% within 3 months, versus 38%), and in a more severe state, as assessed by the Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) score (median 25, versus 50). Cases of PTSD+ were more likely to be travelling from sub-Saharan Africa (92%, versus 70%). Psychotic symptoms tended to develop in Lesbos (59%), as opposed to during (5%) or before (15%) travel. Both conditions responded well to treatment: while a significantly higher proportion of PTSD+ cases required psychotropic medication (93%, versus 79%) and a higher number of sessions (median 8 versus 6), the GAF score at discharge/censoring was similar.

**Conclusion:** PTSD combined with acute psychotic symptoms was a common diagnosis in this population of asylum seekers in involuntary containment. Care protocols need to be updated to reflect the more complex treatment such cases require; additionally, as the conditions of involuntary containment on Lesbos do not allow their full rehabilitation, increased referral capacity off the island and more streamlined asylum processing are urgently required. Whether to include this particularity of psychotic symptoms in PTSD, or to consider this a particular psychiatric syndrome, cannot be decided on the basis of this study alone, and the authors call for multiple studies to better address this issue.

**Keywords:** mental health, PTSD, psychosis, , migrant, Global Assessment Functioning .