

## Migrants Versus Homeless Population in Rehabilitation and Physiotherapy Facilities Suffering from Ectoparasites – Scabies is not a Medical but Social Problem

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### Original Article

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**Abstract:**

**Background:** Long term Rehabilitation, Chronic Care, Palliative Dept. Physiotherapy Units accumulate elderly debilitated polymorbide sometimes homeless patients and hypomobile individuals with different levels of personal hygiene. Ectoparasites increase suffering from long term care and social services.

**Patients and Methods:** The aim of this study was to compare the incidence of scabies among different types of hypomobile and vulnerable populations and compare homeless and elderly to refugees and migrants containing of hypermobile and wounded populations.

**Results:** Among 22 homeless elderly, *Group A*; 42 homeless non-elderly high threshold *Group B*; 55 hypermobile migrants visiting a Rehabilitation and Physiotherapy Center, scabies was massively present in *Group C*. Among the first two Groups, *Homeless A* and *Homeless B* was rare. Increasing personal hygiene in stationary versus mobile Units, better Social Services and hygiene for homeless versus migrants, may be responsible for these unexpected findings.

**Conclusion:** Scabies has to be considered as the commonest ectoparasite followed by louse and mice among physiotherapy and rehabilitation dependent hypomobile elderly homeless clients. However, its incidence among homeless in CEE among migrants via the Balkan Route is incomparably low.

**Introduction**

*The Lancet's Infectious Diseases* highlighted the role of scabies in chronic and rehabilitation care homes in UK (Cassel, 2018) as the commonest ectoparasite in this vulnerable Group of patients. The aim of this study is to compare the incidence of scabies in migrants and refugees from Syria and Iraq via the Balkan Route from Greece to Slovenia via Bosna and Croatia in comparison to elderly and homeless in shelters and long term facilities-hypermobile versus hypomobile population.

Long term Rehabilitation, Chronic Care, Palliative Departments and Physiotherapy Units accumulate elderly debilitated,

polymorbide, sometimes homeless patients and hypomobile individuals with different level of personal hygiene. Ectoparasites increase suffering from long term care and Social Services.

**Patients and Methods**

The first Group of patients was composed of 22 elderly homeless individuals from Resoty Shelter, *Group A*, the second Group was low and middle threshold level population of young homeless in Mea Culpa Shelter - 42 members of *Group B*, and the *Group C* was composed of 55 migrants and refugees migrating from Greece via Bosna

to Croatia, young hypermobile population with children. The incidence of scabies, complications and therapy has been recorded and analyzed.

## Results and Discussion

In *Groups A* and *B*, the hypomobile homeless population from two shelters, one Resoty with an elderly population and secondly Mea Culpa with younger individuals, scabies was exceptional with no case in the *Group A* and 1 in *Group B*. However, *Group C* had 44 of 55 studied cases, which is 80% of all migrants presenting themselves at the health posts in Velka Kladusa and Breko, Bosna. Local therapy with anti-scabies ointment Scabicide TM was used, only in one case Ivermectin was used because of the clinical failure of local therapies. Results of therapy was difficult to assess due to non-compliance of patients; none of them came to their second visit in 5 to 7 days since they left the refugee camp for other countries predominantly Slovenia and Croatia with no follow up. Secondary infections were common, in 50% staphylococcal skin and soft tissue infections, such as staphylogenic impetigo, abscesses and skin phlegmonas have been observed in 40%, that means in 22 patients, and they received additional local anti-staphylococcal ointment, in three cases systemic antimicrobial agents - cotrimoxazol were given with central symptoms such as fever, pain, redness, to avoid cellulitis or staphylococcal sepsis.

The UK Lancet ID study (Cassel, 2018) observed much fewer scabies cases among the elderly than in migrants, however more than we did. The data on complications were rare, less than 5%.

## Conclusions

The hypomobilized population of elderly and homeless elderly individuals has much less scabies skin and soft tissue infections

than migrants and refugees long walking on the Balkan Route from Greece to Slovenia, less hygiene and bad foot conditions and absence of appropriate shoes are the major risk factors from scabies dissemination and presence, in comparison to hypomobile elderly patients from homeless shelters. Increased personal hygiene is possible in shelters however impossible in refugee camps and camping sites, especially after days to weeks of walking and sleeping in tents in open nature whole families closely together increasing transmission from case to case. To stop the scabies epidemic is impossible without the end of long walking and camping due to war and unrest in countries of origin, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen. Social Workers, together with Nurses are helpful in wound management, local therapy with scabicide ointments, prophylaxis of secondary infections, checking the adherence to systemic antimicrobials in complicated cases.

Another important step in this field is applying certain measures for reorientation of social structures that have been generating discrimination, poverty or stigmatization of these groups of persons. In some cases, the aim of the measures concerning this object should be re-formulating entire opinion systems to avoid stigmatization of these groups of persons and to support recovering their sense of security (Schreiter 2018).

Nowadays, when such a large part of the world faces many traumatic situations in different forms, and when so many people have to flee their homes from violence, raising public awareness of the problems of these groups of persons and compliance with important social and moral principles can contribute to effectively providing care to these groups of persons during the tough process of recovery and also prevent many traumatic events (Schreiter 2017).

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