

S19-01 - MIGRANTS IN CRISIS: A CHALLENGE FOR HEALTH SERVICE SYSTEMS

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Migration is perhaps best understood as a sociodemographic context that can increase vulnerability to both mental health problems and emotional crisis. Crisis can be understood as a specific moment of psychological upset that the individual experiences as beyond his or her capacity to cope with effectively. Migrants in crisis, from this perspective, are different from native born individuals on two major fronts. One has to do with the degree to which migration constitutes a stressor, and the other the degree to which culture and migration impact the stress process. A contextual process model of acculturative stress will be presented as a means of making sense of migrants in crisis. Specifically, a crisis occurs with a sort of accumulation of stressors, that are appraised to constitute a grave danger to individual or collective well-being, and, in turn, the evaluation that the individual or collectivity does not have the necessary resources—psychological, social, and material—to mitigate the deleterious effects of the event or situation. Migrants may be more susceptible to crisis precisely because they have access to fewer social and material resources and because their psychological resources—particularly coping styles—may not be consistent with what is normative in the host culture. Effective response at both the clinical and institutional levels requires appreciation of the complexity of the issue without falling prey to cultural reductionism.