Psychotherapeutic care of refugees in Sweden

Aline Braun
Mikaela Lindström
The current situation in numbers

• Sweden has 10 million inhabitants
• ca 1.7 million persons born abroad
• 162,877 asylum seekers in 2015
• 28,939 asylum seekers in 2016

• New, temporary, migration law from June 2016 in order to restrict the number of asylum seekers
• Recent study shows poor mental health in 30-40% of asylum seekers (Tingshög et al 2016)
Health care rights in Sweden

• Refugees (or anyone) with a permanent residence permit have the same rights to health care as citizens of Sweden

• Asylum seekers have a right to emergency care, dental care, maternal care and “health care that can not be postponed”

• People without necessary permits (undocumented migrants) have the same rights to subsidized health care as asylum seekers (since 2013)

• In addition the region is given the ability to provide health care up to the same level as for residents for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants

• Children regardless of legal status has the same rights to health care as children who are citizens
Organization of psychotherapeutic care in Sweden

• In Sweden health care is organized at the regional (county) level (access to trauma treatment may differ depending on where you live)

• Most of the health care provided to asylum seekers and refugees are at the primary care level

• Refugees have less access to specialized treatment and psychotherapeutic interventions

• No general funding for psychotherapy in private settings
Swedish guidelines/best practice

• No national guidelines regarding psychotherapeutic care for refugees

• National guidelines are focused on specific diagnoses

• Regional guidelines in some counties, either on care of trauma related diagnoses or general health care for asylums seekers/refugees
Swedish guidelines/best practice

• In the anxiety guidelines for Stockholm county (2011), it is stated that all patients with PTSD should be offered trauma focused psychotherapy (TF-CBT or EMDR)

• Guidelines for psychiatric care for asylum seekers in Stockholm county from 2009 states that care should be based in the need for care and not legal status