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The recovery experiences of Refugees from Middle Eastern backgrounds with concussions.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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In

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Abstract

With the growing number of Middle Eastern refugees in the world, there is a need for more culturally and refugee specific research to examine the ongoing and idiosyncratic nature of the stress and trauma refugees’ experience. As a result of the arduous journeys refugees undergo, they become susceptible to a number of mental and physical illnesses, including Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) such as concussions. Little research so far has been dedicated to understanding Middle Eastern refugees’ experiences of TBI and how understandings of this injury can impact on their journeys to recovery. In this small Australian, community-based, qualitative study six individuals from Middle Eastern refugee backgrounds, who have experienced a concussion in the past five years were interviewed. Participants included two females and four males, aged from mid 20s to early 60s. The interviews focused on participants’ conceptualisation of concussions and their experience of recovery. Interview data was investigated through the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) lens. Six main themes emerged from interview data, these related to: Coping, consequences of injury, professional relationships, conception of brain and brain injuries, refugee related experiences, and experiences of concussion. All participants stressed the importance of family as a source of support in coping with consequences of injury. Faith in a higher power was highlighted as a core value in Arabic Middle Eastern cultures, common in most interviewee accounts. One source of distress in some participants was the worry that others will perceive them as having mental illness as a consequence of their concussion. Future research is encouraged to examine the stigma underlying mental illness in the Middle East, and the obstacles preventing people with similar backgrounds from seeking help.
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Table 1. Summary of Main Themes

Table 2. Description of Concussion Experiences