**Migration and Schizophrenia: A Review of Findings from Israel and Other Western Countries**

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**Abstract**

Epidemiological studies examining an association between migration and schizophrenia can provide important insights about the socio-environmental factors involved in the outbreak of this mental disorder. The aim of the present article is to present a review of theoretical and empirical literature on this subject and to compare findings from Israel and other Western countries. Studies in Western Europe have shown that first- and second-generation immigrants had two-to-three times the risk of developing schizophrenia and other non-affective psychoses than native-born individuals. The risk was even higher among immigrants from developing countries with physical and/or culturally visible characteristics differentiating them from the native-born population. Findings from non-European Western countries were inconsistent, with some studies showing a decreased incidence of schizophrenia among some migrant groups. Studies conducted in Israel have found that first-generation immigrants had a higher risk of developing schizophrenia, but this risk decreased or did not exist in second-generation immigrants. Of all possible theoretical explanations, the social defeat/exclusion hypothesis seems to best explain the association between migration and schizophrenia, putting genetically vulnerable immigrants at greater risk. Healthcare workers, including family physicians, psychiatrists, and social workers, should be aware of the risks posed by the social adversities that often accompany migration and of the increased risk of schizophrenia, in particular. In Israel, a country with a wide range of immigrant groups, this risk may be particularly relevant for disadvantaged minority groups such as Ethiopian immigrants. Increased social support and access to healthcare services for immigrants and ethnic minorities are essential steps towards minimizing the consequences of this phenomenon.

**Keyword:** immigration, schizophrenia, non-affective psychoses, social exclusion