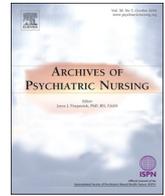




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A Comment on “Mental Health in Immigrants Versus Native Population: A Systematic Review of the Literature”



Dear editor,

We found the article entitled “Mental Health in Immigrants Versus Native Population: A Systematic Review of the Literature” published in 31 (2017) 111–121, by Bas-Sarmiento et al. (Bas-Sarmiento, Saucedo-Moreno, Fernandez-Gutierrez, & Poza-Mendez, 2017) extremely interesting and very informative for researchers who deal with various mental health issues in immigrants. This article was very helpful for us when designing and systemizing our research on immigrants, and we have no doubt that this article is the most recent and reliable systematic review article on immigrant mental health. However, we found one miswritten paragraph. The extent of error is small, but it might cause misunderstanding of Korean psychiatry. Therefore, we are writing a letter to the Editor on that paragraph. The paragraph that we want to see corrected is the following.

“For example, among Moroccans and Koreans, there is no designated term for depression, and it is characteristic for the main manifestation of this pathology to be somatization, which usually results in a search for general care services (Park & Bernstein, 2008) and diagnostic errors.” This sentence is located in the discussion section (page 4).

In Korea, the commonly used designated term for depression is “woo-ul-jeung.” The authors mentioned that they cited the content of the phrases from the original article entitled “Depression and Korean American Immigrants” by Park and Song (Park & Bernstein, 2008), published in 2002 in the *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*. However, there was no evidence of the authors' claim that “There is no designated term for depression in Korea” in the original article. On the contrary, there is a sentence stating that there actually is a designated term for depression in Korea as follows.

“In the study by Shin & Hutton, (2003) of Korean immigrants, depression was translated as ‘woo-ul-jeung, a state of being out-of-balance’: they perceived health and well-being as a balance between body and mind (p. 472).”

Koreans tend to consider depression as a shameful disease and believe that depression develops due to a weakness of will. Among depressive patients in Korea, somatization symptoms are very common compared with other depressive symptoms, and many researchers have found that somatization symptoms are much more commonly seen in Korea compared with western countries. One persuasive explanation for this phenomenon is that somatization is a much more acceptable expression of depression in eastern countries.

The term “hwa-byung,” which means mental or emotional disorder as a result of repressed anger or stress, is listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)-4 (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) as a culture bound syndrome. However, existence of

the term “hwa-byung” does not mean there is no designated term for depression in Korea, and a person showing “hwa-byung” might be diagnosed with depression or panic disorder according to their details and accompanying symptoms. In addition, the term “hwa-byung” was not included in the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Although Koreans tend to hide their emotion to others, it is not correct to say that there is no designated term for depression in Korea.

We hope the indicated paragraph will be revised.

Thank you again to the authors and editors.

FUNDING

This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF) grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-2016S1A5B6914089 and NRF-2017R1D1A1B03031680). The funders did not have any role in study design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish, or preparation of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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