PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES IN VICTIMS OF MARITIME PIRACY: EVALUATION OF EXPERIENCES OF KIDNAPPED SEAFARERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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Abstract

**Objectives**
Maritime piracy is a global emergency and there are no studies to date having investigated the effects of this kind of trauma on kidnapped seafarers and their families. This study has assessed the general health status and the presence of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in kidnapped victims and to evaluate anxiety and depression in family members.

**Methods**
16 subjects were examined approximately 5 months after the release: 4 kidnapped victims were evaluated using the Cognitive Behavioral Assessment (CBA 2.0) and the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS-DX); and 12 family members were evaluated using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI Y) and the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS).

**Results**
All victims showed high scores of state anxiety and emotional instability revealed by CBA 2.0. In addition, 75% of them had traits of anxiety and social adjustment disorder and the half of them developed depression. In 3 of 4 victims a PTSD diagnosis was obvious. Symptoms of recall were documented by higher scores of CAPS-DX. About 70% of family members developed anxiety and/or depression. In the 25% of them both problems were noticeable.

**Conclusion**
Acts of maritime piracy have a serious impact on seafarers and their families and induce psychopathologies characterized by specific features. Stress disorders are common, in particular PTSD that can consolidate into a chronic disorder negatively impacting on the individual’s well-being and functioning. A better understanding of psychological reactions of victims and their families to plan immediate supports and specific therapeutic programs is desirable.