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War and older persons: Correspondence on current Ukraine crisis



Guerra y personas mayores: correspondencia sobre la actual crisis de Ucrania

Dear Editor:

We would like to share some thoughts on the publication “How the war in Ukraine affects older persons”.¹ We firmly believe that doctors around the world will be called upon to help the elderly cope with the war’s devastating consequences.¹ The current situation in Ukraine is concerning, as stated in the editorial. Apart from the urgent need for peace, the international community should work together to give medical assistance and humanitarian assistance. Controlling infectious diseases is essential, and a pandemic resurgence as a result of war is a distinct possibility.² We did like to share some of our own personal experiences from Indochina, an area where ethnic minorities have long been subjected to violence and tragedy. During the battle, there were no medical services in the area. Locals were unable to receive routine vaccines, and the sole operating healthcare facility was a hospital. Locals lacked access to normal treatment, and the sole operational healthcare institution was a field hospital serving refugees on the border of a neighbouring country.³ The specific difficulties impacting the elderly may be more larger and more numerous than those described in Lava et al.’s editorial.¹ (1) In addition to war-related injuries and disease outbreaks, healthcare damage may last for a long time. (2) Another big issue is the health of elderly people evacuated from battle zones. Indeed, governments that accept a large number of refugees may confront difficulties in meeting their healthcare needs. Chronic diseases, infectious diseases, and mental ailments such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and mood disorders can all affect resettling refugee populations. The experiences of old refugees of abrupt societal transition, geographic movement, role discontinuity, identity crisis, and huge

loss are prevalent among many mental patients, regardless of their background, and are factors contributing to the occurrence and severity of the issues.⁴ According to a US investigation, high incidence of diabetes and cardiovascular illness have been recorded among Cambodian aged refugees.⁵ These issues have been thoroughly documented throughout prior Indochina crises. Lessons from the Indochina situation can be useful in urging present plans to assist aged Ukrainian refugees.

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