

# Referrals to a psychiatric service: a descriptive study of survivors of the Nairobi US Embassy terrorist bomb blast.

Ndetei, DM; Omar, A; Mutiso, VN; Ongecha, FA; Kokonya, DA

## **Abstract:**

**OBJECTIVE:** To document the socio-demographic characteristics and psychiatric profiles of the survivors of the Nairobi United States Embassy terrorist bomb blast referred to a psychiatric and psychotherapy (counselling) service. **METHOD:** This was a descriptive cross-sectional study. Clinical interviews and structured questionnaires for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and stress were administered. Survivors of the bomb blast referred to a psychiatric and psychotherapy service one year or more after the bombing were included in the study. These survivors had been treated using psychopharmacotherapy and individualised (not group) therapy/counselling.

**RESULTS:** Eighty-three consecutive referrals to a psychiatric service participated in this study. There were more males and the sample was generally well educated. The referrals made contact with the referring agency for a number of reasons including seeking psychological, financial and medical assistance. All the patients reported varying degrees of psychiatric symptoms and functional impairment on various aspects of social occupational functioning. High scores for PTSD and other related stress were recorded one or more years after the bombing.

**CONCLUSION:** Although the survivors indicated that initial counselling following the blast had helped them, they still scored high on PTSD suggesting that clinically, the initial counselling had little, if any impact on the development of PTSD. There is need for a holistic approach to the management of psychotrauma in individuals.