

come from Syria. Evidence on the burden of chronic pain among Syrian refugees is important in planning adequate and accessible health services for this group. We assessed the burden of pain and use of painkillers among Syrian refugees at two stages in their migration.

Methods:

We used a cross-sectional design based on survey data. Participants were recruited in transit in Lebanon while awaiting departure to the host country, and after arrival in Norway. All adults of Syrian origin were invited to participate. We developed a context-sensitive questionnaire in Arabic. Data collection began in 2017 and was finalised in early 2018.

Results:

In preliminary results from the first 119 participants enrolled, 31% of the refugees in Lebanon (mean age 36 years) reported that they had pain lasting for more than six months. Similarly, the prevalence was 28% among the refugees in Norway (mean age 29 years). Daily use of painkillers bought over the counter was reported to be 11% in Lebanon while the share among Syrian refugees in Norway was 8%. Daily use of painkillers prescribed by health staff was 5% in Lebanon, and 10% in Norway.

Conclusions:

The frequency of chronic pain among Syrian refugees, both during migration and after arrival, is on the same level as in the general population in Norway, even though the refugee population is much younger.

Main message:

Chronic pain among young adult refugees should be assessed and targeted to improve function and integration.

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Reported pain and use of painkillers among Syrian refugees at various stages in the migration process

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Background:

Chronic pain is prevalent in the general population, affecting approximately 30% of Norwegian adults, with the highest levels seen among middle aged and older individuals. However, data on the prevalence of pain and use of painkillers along the migration path and among newly arrived immigrants is sparse. Most of the refugees arriving in Norway since 2015