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ETHNIC AND CULTURAL IMPACT ON DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS - A COMPARISON STUDY IN AUSTRIAN AND TURKISH PATIENTS

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The cultural and ethnic background of a patient may have a significant impact on the presentation of a psychiatric disorder. In this study symptoms assessed within a major depressive episode in 3 groups of female patients were compared:

1. women of Austrian origin,
2. women of Turkish origin but living in Austria and
3. Turkish women living in Turkey.

Patients were recruited at University hospitals either in Innsbruck, Austria, or Izmir, Turkey. A total of 136 patients were included into the study. Rating instruments included the Montgomery Åsberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS), the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the Bradford Somatic Inventory (BSI). Groups differed significantly with respect to severity as well as symptom clusters. Although Austrian patients were more often treated as in-patients they appeared to be less severely depressed. Both Turkish groups, however, presented somatic symptoms significantly more often than Austrian depressed women. Austrian-Turkish patients displayed some somatic symptoms even more frequently than Turkish patients in their home-country. It is essential for the diagnosis and treatment of depression to take ethnic and cultural issues of the patients into account.