North African refugees, fleeing the fighting, admitted to Sicilian hospitals from January 1st to June 10th, 2011

Linda Pasta · Gaetano Marchese

Received: 13 June 2011 / Accepted: 23 June 2011 / Published online: 7 July 2011
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2011

As declared on June 1st 2011 by Italian Minister Maroni, many boats have transported about 42,000 Africans (90% men) fleeing the fighting, almost all to Lampedusa, a small island off Italy's southern coast, from January 1st to June 10th, 2011. Mostly were Tunisians, Nigerians, Ethiopians, Eritreans and Somalis. All patients who needed hospitalization were transported by the "Emergency 118 Helicopter Service", to those Sicilian hospitals in which beds were reserved for this purpose. A prospective analysis of migrants' admissions in Sicilian hospitals was carried out. Patients were classified according to the admission diagnosis reported on medical records of 118 and data were aggregated according to: disease, sex and ward in which hospitalization was required. 97 patients required hospitalization in 6 Sicilian hospitals: females/males ratio was 57/40. The median age was 26 (range 14–45) years: women are a bit younger than males: 24 (range 16–32) and 27 (range 14–45) years. The nationality was declared by 66

patients: they were mainly Tunisian, Nigerians, and Libyans. Women were admitted to hospital almost exclusively for obstetrics and gynecological problems, while men for trauma or severe dehydration problems and attempted suicide to avoid forced repatriation to their own countries (Table 1). All were discharged in good health. These data confirm the reassuring news on migrant' good state of health upon arrival in Italy. This should reassure the people and push the Italian and European public health systems to maintain their procedures, including screening and/or vaccination, hygiene and the chance to have an immediate cultural integration and work. It would vary important to create an international task force with the aim to actively protect the health of refugees during the crossing of the Strait of Sicily, where it is estimated that 1,500 refugees died. This seems more important than the health problems of those who arrive at Lampedusa.

Table 1 Patients landed to Lampedusa, who needed hospitalization in Sicilian hospitals, transported by the "Emergency 118 Helicopter Service", in relation to the ward, the cause of hospitalization, and sex

Male/female (M/F)	7/0	9/0	0/55	14/2	10/0
WARD	INF	MED/CARD/DERM	OB/GYN	CHIR/ORT	CRITICAL CARE/NEPHR
	4 Tbc	4 Severe abdominal discomfort	42 Pregnancies (1 patient HIV)	2 Appendicitis	3 Epileptic seizures
	1 Pneumonia	3 Dehydration	8 Abortions	4 Acute abdomen	1 Cerebral edema
	2 Gastroenteritis	1 Myocardial infarction	1 Ectopic pregnancy	7 Limb fractures	5 Suicide attempt
		1 Scabies	4 Strong pelvic pain	3 Traumatic brain injury	1 Acute renal failure

L. Pasta (✉)
V. Cervello Hospital, Internal Medicine and Referral Centre
for Chronic Liver Diseases, Palermo, Italy
e-mail: lindpas@yahoo.it

G. Marchese
SUES 118 Emergency Service, Palermo-Trapani, Italy