

Sexual Assault Care Centres (SACC): Holistic care for victims of sexual violence in Belgium

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Introduction

- A feasibility study was performed in 2015-2016. Based on a literature review, interviews with victims, health care workers, police, justice and other partners, and work visits to other European Sexual Assault Care Centres (SACC), a Belgian model of care for victims of acute sexual violence (SV) was developed.
- Sexual assault care centers were piloted in three Belgian cities from November 2017 until October 2018.
- Today there are 8 Sexual assault care centers in Belgium: Brussels (2017), Ghent (2017), Luik (2017), Antwerp (2021), Charleroi (2021), Roeselare (2022), Leuven (2022)
- A quantitative prospective study was carried out assessing the characteristics of SACC patients, the sexual violence they experienced, and the care received with the aim to inform the national scale-up of the SACC-model.

Belgian Sexual Assault Care Centres

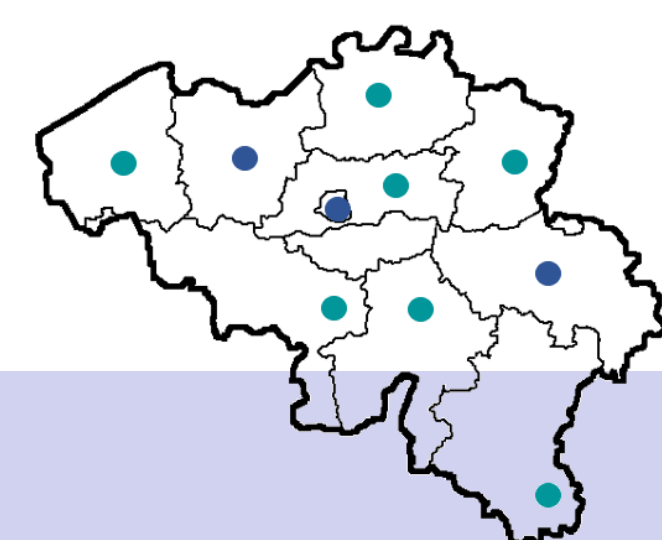
Acute care

- First psychological aid
- Medical care
- Forensic examination (<1 week) by forensic nurse
- Possibility of an interrogation by a vice inspector

Follow-up care

- Coordinated by SACC case manager, in collaboration with medical, psychosocial and legal services
- Psychological care by psychologist

For victims of sexual violence presenting within 1 month. All ages.



Methods

- Mixed method evaluation of Belgian SACCs.
- Quantitative prospective study data on patient characteristics, SV experienced and care path followed. Data are recorded in the electronic patient record by SACC nurses and psychologists, analysis in SPSS 25.
- Triangulation is provided with data from interviews and focus groups on acceptance and outcome with patients, support figures, forensic nurses, doctors, police and involved justice system.
- 25/10/2017 - 31/12/2021
- Monitoring and registration and further data analysis of the SACCs is an ongoing process.

Results



Conclusions

- Sexual violence is a major public health problem in Belgium, more than 4943 victims of SV sought care in the Belgian SACC by the end of December 2021.
- SACCs provide 24/7 free holistic (=psychosocial, medical and embedded forensic) care to victims of recent SV. Of the victims, 69% contact the SACC within a week and receive full holistic care from forensic nurses supported by specialists.
- In cooperation with sexual trauma psychologists the nurses foresee in long term follow-up care and case management.
- Police and justice state that the SACC lead to more focused police interviews, more efficient investigations and a broadened agency.
- Victims and their support figures evaluate the SACC as very supportive, non-judgmental and re-enabling.

Victims' experiences

- "I feel received by prepared people, in a safe environment, making progress and taking care of myself through the tools the centre is offering me. I am impressed by how thoughtful everyone is here, I feel treated humanely regardless of my legal status." (Victim SACC Brussels)
- "I think it is really fantastic... Without the SACC I would not have progressed so fast." (Victim SACC Ghent)

KEY REFERENCES

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