

**Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry  
Global Mental Health Program**

**Psychiatric Care Of Somali Refugees In Minnesota – Making  
Use Of History And Culture**

**Jerome Kroll, MD**

Professor of Psychiatry Emeritus at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

**Thursday October 27, 3-5pm**

Room 138, Irving Ludmer 1033 Pine Avenue West H3A 1A1

3:00-5:00 pm

I would like to loosely divide this presentation into two overlapping parts, called Content and Process.

The first part (more content, some process) will provide a description of the acculturation process of the Somali community (50,000) in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Greater Metropolitan area. This shall include a brief outline of the 'modern' history of the Somali people in the Horn of Africa since the organized European colonization of Africa of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This history erupted on the world stage in 1991 with the onset of the Somali Civil War, following several decades of increasing antagonism between the Somali dictator and the disaffected clans. This history also includes Somalia's troubled relationship with its neighbors, especially Ethiopia and Kenya, who now uncomfortably contain the bulk of the Somali diaspora within Africa. I shall discuss the events of the Civil War and how these events shaped both the failure of the nation to survive thus far as a nation, and the impact upon the refugees who fled Somalia and upon the internally displaced population. I shall try to develop an interactive picture of how Somali culture has shaped its particular Civil War and aftermath, and how that culture has itself changed as Somalis who fled to African and more distant host countries have been affected by their sudden immersion into and dependency upon these cultures. My plan in the middle of all this is not to lose sight of the psychiatric perspective, with the development of new family dynamics and gender roles, and the physical and psychological damages to the individuals involved. The role of clans, khat use, and Islamic religion will be included as part of this cultural appraisal

The second part is to focus on the process of doing and teaching transcultural psychiatry, of how I go about interviewing patients, of readjusting my traditional psychiatric boundaries to the cultural expectations of non-Western patients, of

assessing the cultural sensitivity of the scientific approach of structured interviews, diagnostic instruments, and time management of half-hour appointments, and of the many changes which the clinic has had to make in providing good care for its newest and largest refugee group – all this against a background of America’s ambiguous love-hate affair with immigrants, refugees, and asylees. I dearly want feedback and discussion from the McGill Transcultural Psychiatry Group on the process issues, since all these issues are at the heart of the matter of how we go about doing our work as we try to figure out exactly what is the nature of the work we are trying to do, and how we and our patients (and our larger cultures) change as we engage each other.

\*\*\*All are Welcome\*\*\*

Jerome Kroll is professor of psychiatry emeritus at the University of Minnesota Medical School. He has a B.A. (philosophy) from Brown University and an M.D. from Albert Einstein College of Medicine. His psychiatric residency training was at Case Western Reserve University Hospitals. Dr. Kroll has clinical experience in a prison setting (Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas), state hospital (Rockland State Hospital, New York), and inpatient service (New York Hospital and University of Minnesota Hospitals). He moved to the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1976. He was named Teacher of the Year by the residency program in 1983, 1985, and 2001, and Psychiatrist of the Year (2015) by the Minnesota Psychiatric Association. He was twice invited to serve as consultant to the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis. Dr. Kroll is past-president (2002-2008) of the Association for the Advancement of Philosophy and Psychiatry.

Dr. Kroll has written *The Challenge of the Borderline Patient* (1988) and *PTSD/Borderlines in Therapy: Finding the Balance* (1993). He has co-authored, with Sir Martin Roth, *The Reality of Mental Illness* (1986; reprinted 2009), and with Bernard Bachrach, *The Mystic Mind* (2005). He contributed the chapter on borderline personality disorder to the *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior* (1994) and entries on mental illness for the *Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (2010). He has published research articles on borderline personality disorder and on the history of mental illness in medieval Europe.

Dr. Kroll is currently serving as psychiatrist for the Southeast Asian and East African Refugee Mental Health Program at the Community-University Health Care Center in Minneapolis, a position held since 1978. He is psychiatric consultant to the Wilder Foundation Southeast Asian ACT Program in St. Paul. His current research interests include transcultural processes in psychiatric adjustment and illnesses in refugee populations, and the scientific and ethical issues involved in the uneasy fit between Evidence-based Psychiatry and Culturally-Competent Psychiatry.