

# The Psychological aftermath of Voluntary Medical Assistance after the Terrorist Attack on the Brussels Metro: Who's the Doctor for the Doctor?

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## Abstract

On 2016 March 22th, the national airport and the metro in Brussels were the target of two successive terrorist attacks which killed 35 people and seriously injured hundreds of others. Due to my voluntary commitment near the Maelbeek metro station, I was left out in terms of acute psychosocial relief, since I was not involved in an organization such as fire brigade or police. Research shows that in the aftermath of a terrorist attack, healthcare providers directly involved in the rescue of these victims report a significantly higher psychological impact, defined by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms, than those not directly involved. A number of victims and rescue workers exhibit a mixture of PTSD and mild Traumatic Brain Injury, which is a typical trauma-like brain concussion syndrome. Furthermore, unaffiliated volunteers seem to be at higher risk of posttraumatic stress, while professional rescue workers appear to be more protected. As a child psychiatrist in training, I quit my residency after the attack, and started a career in occupational medicine. In Brussels, I work with employers and employees who experienced this tragedy. In my presentation I give answers on the following questions: How did they deal with this event? What impact do these terrorist attacks still have, five years later? What are the lessons learned in the field of psychotrauma care in Belgium? And finally, I will tell you my story about the impact of the event in my doctor's office, for my patients and likewise, for me as a doctor.

## Biography

Tine Gregoor is a Belgian occupational health physician, child consultation clinic physician, public speaker, author and philanthropist. She has experience in anesthesiology and childhood psychiatry and has a special interest in the field of maternity protection, mental illness, particularly in the

management of psychotrauma. During the 2016 Brussels attacks at the Maelbeek metrostation, Gregoor was a first responder, helped the most heavily injured in a prehospital setting. In her book 'Bombs in Brussels', which she wrote together with war journalist Joanie de Rijke, she goes in search of victims, relatives, aid workers, policymakers and security services five years afterwards.