



Florence Clinic: Refugees and Community Health

Laura Heinemann, Laeth Nasir, Alexander Rödlach SVD, and Dianne Travers Gustafson

Omaha is identified by the Office of Refugee Resettlement as a nationally preferred metropolitan resettlement site. Forced displacement, due to exposures to violence, deprivation, and risky environments, creates challenges to people's physical and mental health and encourages agencies to meet the health and healthcare needs of refugees.

Creighton's Florence Clinic in North Omaha is a unique health care center that serves refugees from various countries and ethnic groups, in addition to members of the local community. The Florence Clinic is committed to just and equitable care for all people. Clinic staff provides both initial health screenings and ongoing individual and family health care for refugees living in Omaha.

Refugee Health Needs

The needs of refugee populations overall are not limited to health care as it has been traditionally conceptualized. Issues of salience to the refugee experience can include losses of family, community and livelihood, in addition to exposures to new and unfamiliar social customs, stresses and hazards. These factors may increase the prevalence and consequences of problems such as mental illness, domestic violence and substance abuse experienced by refugees. Little is known about how the social determinants of health can be addressed proactively and effectively in ethnically and culturally diverse groups. Additionally, there is a dearth of research based on direct conversation with refugees to elicit their health concerns and needs and to reflect on their clinical healthcare experiences. Thus, refugee health concerns and needs are often poorly understood and may be poorly addressed.



Karen, refugees from Burma, organizing a New Year Celebration in Omaha

The healthcare workforce of the future is challenged to focus on prevention, team and community-based care, and the discovery, development and dissemination of new health care models. The increased focus on community-based health care and population level interventions requires new paradigms for providing health care through effective and efficient interdisciplinary teams in partnership with communities. There is an urgent need to bring together health care providers and community colleagues who can innovate, create new knowledge and disseminate best practices in individual and community health.

Innovative Responses

We are currently developing a qualitative study to address the needs and concerns of refugees and their communities related to their health, the health services they receive, and whether these services are congruent to their perceived needs. The research team also includes twelve students from the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Medicine, and the School of Nursing, who will contribute the specific perspectives of their majors and professional training to this study and will become familiar with the value of interdisciplinary team research.

Sustainability of this project will be addressed by applying for ongoing additional funding from a grant from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation which seeks to fund proposals having the potential to deliver better health, better health care, at lower costs to Medicare, Medicaid, and Children's Health Insurance Program enrollees. New refugee populations are generally covered by these programs.



Sudanese refugees in Omaha.

Sponsored by the Creighton University Jesuit Community, in association with the Deglman Center for Ignatian Spirituality.