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Promoting Refugee Health and Welfare during COVID-19 Virtual Issue

This timely and authoritative Virtual Issue from the editor of *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Khalid Koser, gathers together a range of papers published in recent years. Read an introduction to the collection and each of the selected papers from Dr. Koser, outlining their importance for understanding refugee health and welfare.

Introduction

by Khalid Koser

There are growing concerns about how the COVID-19 pandemic will impact refugees. Already, there have been outbreaks in asylum seeker centres in Germany, Switzerland, the UK and other advanced countries.

As the virus takes hold in poorer countries, refugees in camps may be especially vulnerable; the first deaths have been reported in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, with dire warnings of a humanitarian disaster if the outbreak is not checked.

It is too soon for the *Journal of Refugee Studies* to publish peer-reviewed research on COVID-19, but we are tracking exciting new research and intend to publish field reports before the end of the year.

In the meantime, we have looked back through our archives at earlier publications on refugee health and welfare, many of which can inform current efforts to protect refugees during and after the pandemic.

Articles

[Refugee Health and Wellbeing: Differences between Urban and Camp-Based Environments in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Thomas M. Crea, Rocío Calvo, Maryanne Loughry

This 2015 article concludes that health and wellbeing are better for refugees in urban than camp settings in Africa. The current pandemic may turn these findings on their head, as COVID-19 appears to thrive in cities where it can be transmitted quickly at close range through the movement and frequent contact between people. Countries with higher urban populations are faced with the logistical and communication challenge of informing, monitoring, and possibly isolating a larger pool of at-risk people. Stay-at-home orders have also proved difficult to maintain in African cities where many residents lack adequate shelter, sanitation, and the monetary means to stock up on supplies and to stop work.

[I Want to Do Anything which Is Decent and Relates to My Profession: Refugee Doctors' and Teachers' Strategies of Re-Entering Their Professions in the UK](#)

Emilia Piętka-Nykaza

Around the world, thousands of people from refugee backgrounds with experience in healthcare could prove a vital resource in the battle to treat COVID-19 patients. Countries including Ireland, Germany, Australia and France are examining that potential, and the response from refugee communities has been huge. But medical professions are some of the most regulated in the world, and innovative solutions are needed to overcome the logistical challenge of verifying people's qualifications and deploying their expertise. This article describes the most effective strategies adopted by refugee doctors (and teachers) to regain their professions.

[Factors Influencing Contraception Awareness and Use: The Experiences of Young African Australian mothers](#)

Mimmie Claudine Ngum Chi Watts, Celia McMichael, Pranee Liamputtong

This article shows that attitudes towards and use of contraception among African refugees in Australia are influenced by parental sexual health literacy and attitudes, gender roles and culturally informed attitudes around motherhood. The lesson is that health service providers in the context of COVID-19, should consider the value of whole-of-family and community

approaches in order to improve knowledge and decision-making around health decisions by refugees.

Health Service Access and Utilization among Syrian Refugees and Affected Host Communities in Lebanon

Emily Lyles, Baptiste Hanquart, Lara Chlela, Michael Woodman, LHAS Study Team, Fouad M Fouad, Abla Sibai, Shannon Doocy

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, access to health care and medication was worse among Syrian refugees in Lebanon as compared to the host community; the primary barrier to care in both groups was cost. This article shows that strengthening primary health services and educating communities about rational care-seeking and home treatment of mild illness may decrease health costs and reduce the burden on the Lebanese health system. Health system reform towards universal health care for refugees and vulnerable Lebanese that is supported by the international community could also help to ensure integration and provide less costly and more sustainable health services access for refugees. Unfortunately neither of these recommendations had been implemented by the time COVID-19 emerged.

Journey to Health: (Re) Contextualizing the Health of Canada's Refugee Population

K Bruce Newbold, Marie McKeary

Another article that emphasizes the particular challenges of providing health care to refugees, even in an advanced state like Canada. The authors demonstrate how health status should be contextualized within pre-arrival health status and living conditions, health-care access, flight experiences, combined with post-arrival status: a fluid journey-to-health arc. Their findings illustrate how refugees embark on fragmented journeys, leading to multiple challenges for providers, such as limited case histories, the absence of documentation and cultural incompetence in terms of practice.

Gardening in Displacement: The Benefits of Cultivating in Crisis

Juliet Millican, Carrie Perkins, Andrew Adam-Bradford

Living in lockdown these last few months perhaps gives us a slight insight into what life is like for refugees in camps, and many of them have been in camps for decades not a few months.

This article demonstrates the benefits of gardening to mental health and trauma recovery for refugees in camps. Perhaps we can learn from them.

Experiences of Discrimination and Self-reported Health

Carolin Rapp, Valentina Cardozo, Terje Andreas Eikemo, Theoni Stathopoulou

In most countries at the moment, responses to COVID-19 depend on people self-reporting to the health service as symptoms emerge. This study shows that discrimination is an important additional reason for reporting poor health. Moreover, it finds that women in particular suffer more from discrimination and thus report bad health.

Infectious-disease Screening and Vaccination for Refugees and Asylum Seekers Entering Europe in 2015–16: A Scoping Study of Six European Union Countries

Pierluca Piselli, Mariya Samuilova, Kayvan Bozorgmehr, Giuseppe Ippolito, Roumyana Petrova-Benedict, Alexander Kentikelenis, Enrico Girardi

Although it is too soon to assess to what extent asylum seekers and refugees have been tested for COVID-19, this article is perhaps reassuring, at least in the European context. It demonstrates that even during a period when very large numbers of asylum seekers were arriving in Europe, there were no major barriers to accessing acute hospital care for infectious diseases. On the other hand, and looking forward to the prospect of a vaccination against COVID-19, the study did find shortcomings with respect to adult vaccination.

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‘Street-level justifications’: Service providers mediating refugee reception in the urban context of Istanbul

Linking migration aspirations to integration prospects: the experience of Syrian refugees in Sweden

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