

Syrian Refugees in Canada

Background:

- 4,000,000 Syrians displaced by war
- Canada plans to accept 25,000 by end of Feb 2016
- Currently 10,000 arrivals in Canada (as of January 12)
- In Newfoundland approximately 200 since early January, mostly Government-assisted refugees, some are Privately –sponsored, another 65 people expected through private sponsorship in the near future
- Arabic - native language of 90 % of population
- 84 % population is literate (90 % of men and 77 % of women).
- 56 % of Syria's population resided in urban areas prior to the conflict, particularly in Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, and Homs
- All Syrian refugees arriving in Canada have been living in asylum in Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey for 3-4 years.
- 52 % under the age of 18 and especially vulnerable
- Living conditions in asylum countries vary greatly but overall are poor, particularly in Lebanon
- inadequate shelter, clean water, health care, schools
- 68 % of children unable to attend school since have left Syria and living in other countries
- Have lived in refugee camps, apartments, containers, abandoned buildings, insecure dwellings prior to arrival here.
- Experience racism in asylum countries
- DM, IHD, hypertension, vision & hearing problems in age >65
- Mental health is one of the most prevalent health concerns
- 43 percent of Syrian refugees – are victims violence or torture (UNHCR)
- mental health most prevalent health concern for children ages 5 to 17 (victims trauma/witness violence)
- one in 10 refugee families in Jordan –have at least one family member with disability , 41 % of those are children.
- Sexual violence - concern for many women and girls, in Syria, detention centers, household searches, military raids , checkpoints, also in asylum countries
- women and girls stay home, venturing outside only when accompanied by other family because sexual violence

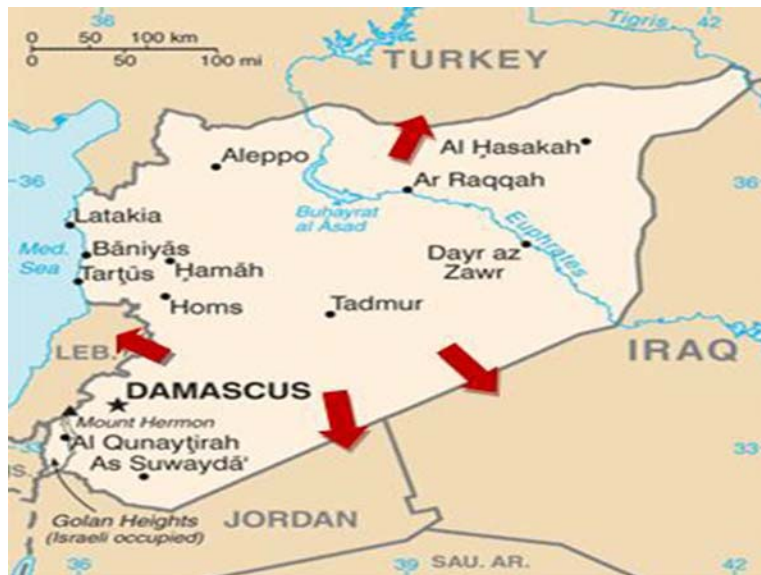
Mental Health:

- Don't routinely screen for PTSD as intrusive enquiry may worsen symptoms
- Majority those with PTSD will get better once in safe country, watch for problems affecting daily function as get to know patient better
- Can refer children to Janeway Mental Health services (psychologists and social workers) if needed, contact for intake: 777-2200(phone),777-2211(fax)

- Adults can be referred to the Adult Mental Health Intake Services of Eastern Health or to private psychology counselling services; this requires prior approval by IFH (coverage for 10 sessions). Social workers at the Association for New Canadians can arrange counselling through Eastern Health or privately. The social workers are Helena Vokey or Michelle Corbett and contact number is 722-9680.

Definitions:

- GAR -government assisted refugee (designated by UN prior to arrival)
- PSR -privately sponsored refugee (sponsored by community groups or individuals)
- IFHP -interim federal health program (covers medications and some health benefits such as optometry and dentist for first 12 months in Canada). All Syrian refugees and GARs have MCP coverage in NL.
- Refugee claimant (those who ask for asylum once have entered Canada)



All immunizations (children and adults) will be done by public health.

Dentist – ANC will arrange

Optometry – Drs. Webb and Hounsell have been accepting refugee patients.

Consult letters- we suggest putting the following near top of referral letter “please contact my office with date/time appointment as patient does not speak english”, then your staff make arrangements/notify ANC. Otherwise, patients are sent letters in English about the appointment which they cannot read.

Prescriptions: Meds covered by IFH program- same coverage as NLPDP(we suggest writing note on script to pharmacy to contact you if meds not covered by IFH).Tell patient to bring IFH document to pharmacy along with prescription.

Contacts:

Barbara Albrechtsons , public health nurse at Association for New Canadians (752-4182)

Michelle Corbett, Helena Vokey- social workers Association for New Canadians (722-9680)

Heather Matthews, Health settlement ANC (contact for arranging appointments, and all other health related matters), 722-9680

Pauline S. Duke MD, FCFP

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