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Refugee Health Care Personal Enrichment Course SPRING 2021

Course Dates: January 5, 12, 26 (5-7PM)
Plus 2 off-campus sessions (evening/Saturday AM)

Maximum Students: 10

Class Year: MS1 and MS2

Course Director: Thuy Bui, MD
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Description:

Pittsburgh is home to over 26,000 foreign-born residents and 4,500 refugees who have resettled in the last decade. The refugee population in Pittsburgh includes members from Bhutan, Burma, Somalia, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Syria. As these refugees reside permanently in the U.S., they face unique health challenges such as psychological trauma from conflict and displacement, language and cultural barriers, and understanding of the U.S. healthcare system. Through hands-on experiences and community field trips, this course introduces medical students to the basic health requirements of refugees living in Pittsburgh and brings awareness to some of their access barriers and available resources.

Course Objectives:

1. Describe the health and cultural profiles of key refugee groups in Pittsburgh, focusing on current health needs and priority health conditions
2. Recognize health care access and challenges refugees face navigating the US health care system and access community resources to help refugees overcome barriers to care
3. Identify various health and social services agencies that are involved in resettling refugees
4. Describe the common physical and psychological issues affecting refugees such as PTSD and how these are affected by resettlement
5. Communicate effectively with patients from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including the use of interpreters
6. Develop interpersonal skills and a deeper understanding of refugees by having in-person experiences with members of the refugee population

Requirements:

Attend all 5 sessions and read the brief assignment for each session

COURSE OUTLINE: Refugee Health Mini-Elective

LOCATION: Session 1, 2 & 3 - Zoom, Session 4 - TBD, Session 4- SHHC

Session 1: Overview of Refugee Health Services in Pittsburgh/ Healthcare for Asylum Seekers (1/5)

Students will be given a brief overview of refugee health in Pittsburgh and the many unique factors to consider in caring for these patients. We will have a discussion of healthcare for asylum seekers, healthcare exams for asylees, and asylum clinic initiatives at the University of Pittsburgh. Next, students will watch a short documentary and have a discussion afterwards.

Reading: Crosby SS. Primary Care Management of non-English-speaking refugees who have experienced trauma. A clinical review. JAMA 2013; 310(5):519-528

Session 2: The Process of Seeking Asylum, and the Role of Healthcare Providers (1/12)

A guest speaker from the law school will talk about the process of gaining asylum in the United States, the obstacles faced by those going through this process, and how a medical evaluation can help make one's case.

Session 3: Challenges in Caring for Immigrants and Refugees (1/26)

Students will have the opportunity to hear from Dr. Andrea Fox, medical director of the Squirrel Hill Health Center and an expert on refugee health in Pittsburgh, about the unique challenges of the refugee population in Pittsburgh. Topics discussed will include the blue interpreter phone, cultural sensitivity and adjustments based on ethnicity (ex. in the Arab culture, physical contact in the form of a handshake is considered disrespectful), and providing refugee patients with appropriate resources for mental, emotional, and community needs.

Session 4: Refugee Support Group (TBD – could be a Saturday morning)

Students will visit a community support group one evening or Saturday morning to talk with refugees about their experiences in Pittsburgh. The students may be required to prepare a short (10-15 minute) presentation on a health topic that the refugees would like to learn more about. The list of potential topics will be given to students at the beginning of the mini-elective to allow time for them to prepare prior to attending the support group.

Reading: Appropriate research regarding health topic chosen

Session 5: Navigating Healthcare for Refugee Population (Individual session: TBD)

Students will have an opportunity to go to the Squirrel Hill Health Center (SHHC) to talk to healthcare providers for the refugee population and learn about common themes in working with refugee patients. Space and time permitting, students will also be able to shadow one of the healthcare providers at SHHC to gain a further insight on the unique challenges and health issues that refugees face in navigating the healthcare system in the United States.

Reading: <http://squirrelhillhealthcenter.org/>