New funding for refugee health in NSW: Following the Australian Government’s decision to increase its refugee intake by an additional 12,000 places for refugees fleeing the Syrian crisis, NSW Health has boosted the capacity of key health services to meet the increased demand. It is expected that 6,000 will settle in NSW in the next two years with key settlement areas including Fairfield and Liverpool. This is in addition to the estimated 4,300 refugees settled in NSW each year. While the Syrian/Iraqi intake is a one-off, the Federal Government has committed to increasing the annual intake from 13,750 to 18,750 by 2018.

Additional funding has been provided to the Refugee Health Service (RHS), STARTTS, the Sydney Children’s Hospital Network, and relevant Local Health Districts. RHS is planning a new clinic site in Fairfield, and outreach to Intensive English Centres and to certain other schools in Sydney that have significant enrolments of newly arrived refugee young people. Other new programs will focus on early childhood and family health, healthy eating, support for complex care, and volunteers as health system navigators/mentors. Recruitment for Refugee Health nurses, a dietician, social worker, and project staff will commence soon via NSW Health’s eRecruit.

Revised policy directive for NSW Health staff working with Medicare-ineligible asylum seekers: NSW Health’s asylum seeker policy has been updated, although its intent remains unchanged. See Medicare Ineligible and Reciprocal Health Agreement - Classification and Charging, PD2016_031. The fee waiver rule should be considered to continue to apply as under the previous policy which provides eligible community-based asylum seekers without Medicare access to a fee waiver for most (non-elective) public health services.

Free Refugee Health Training online: In consultation with RHS and other refugee health experts, the Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) have developed two online courses on refugee health. This is available for free to all NSW Health employees, by following the link to HETI Online from your LHD intranet.

Refugee Health Forum: Multicultural Health SESLHD and RHS are joining forces to present a Research to Practice Forum on Refugee Health on 15th November. Speakers include Dr Jill Benson (Director of Health and Human Diversity at the University of Adelaide), RHS’ Dr Mitchell Smith, A/ Prof Karen Zwi (SCHN), and Renee Symonds, a Clinical Psychologist talking about Intergenerational Trauma in Children of Holocaust Survivors. Contact Patty Loukas for details. Event is free but bookings are essential. To be held at The Rowers, Wolli Creek, Sydney.

Refugee Health Service at Refugee Week: In addition to Grand Rounds presentations, RHS held a stall at Liverpool Hospital this year (photo at left), providing information and education targeted at health staff not embedded within the refugee health space.

Introducing Refugee Nurses Australia [RNA]: a national network of refugee nurses has been formed: it will be launched at the Australian College of Nursing National Forum in October 2016. For more information, contact NSW representatives Michele Greenwood or Sandy Eagar.
Tours of a Refugee Camp in my Neighbourhood: nearly 250 health staff attended the health-specific tours of Cumberland Council's Refugee Camp in my Neighbourhood in August. The simulated refugee camp setting was a great opportunity for health professionals to gain deeper insight into the background of and health challenges for their patients of refugee background.

Refugee portfolio at the Ministry of Health: RHS is welcomes the appointment of Mr Nick Sandrejko to the refugee policy portfolio. Mr Sandrejko is a Senior Policy Officer at the Priority Programs Unit, Health and Social Policy Branch.

'Tell Your Story' online tool for refugee men: The Refugee Trauma and Recovery Program (UNSW) developed this multilingual online program to help refugee and asylum seeker men overcome the stigma associated with mental health difficulties. Available in Farsi, Arabic and Tamil, the program contains advice and information about stress alongside short videos in which men from refugee communities share positive stories of resilience and recovery.


Doctors challenge the Border Force Act: Doctors for Refugees are launching a High Court challenge against secrecy provisions in the Federal Government's Border Force Act, which they say gags them from publicly speaking out about the welfare of refugees and asylum seekers in detention.

Input on refugee health: The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is seeking feedback, suggestions and concerns from individuals and organisations for its annual national consultations on Australia's refugee and asylum policies. This year they are particularly interested in feedback regarding access to mental health and disability services.

Congratulations to the Multicultural Health Communication Service for winning the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication awards in communication effectiveness to the Pink Sari Project, with whom RHS was a partner.

Key background resources on the health of refugees from Syria:
- NSW Health’s factsheet: Information for Local Health District staff on the new Syrian refugee arrivals;
- Immigrant Health Clinic (Royal Children's Hospital Melb) Syrian refugees - key issues webpage
- Transcultural Mental Health Centre’s factsheet: Mental Health of Syrian refugees

STARTTS’ latest Hints to Healing magazine explores the importance of cultural competency when working in schools with children and young people of refugee backgrounds.
RHS’ factsheet Health Undertakings for migrants & refugees arriving in NSW has been updated. See also NSW Health Tuberculosis health undertakings for migrants and refugees arriving in NSW.

Looking for Cancer statistics? Cancer Institute’s NSW website provides Cancer Statistics which allows users to search for cancer incidence by region of birth.

New languages added to the Appointment Reminder Translation Tool: appointment reminders can now be produced in Hakka Chin, Bosnian, and Samoan.

New translated NDIS factsheets are available online in multiple community languages.

Compilation of research on the health of asylum seeker and refugee children: see the Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health special edition on the topic.

Training and professional development

14 Oct 2016: Cultural Competence with Refugees one-day workshop, $149, $99, STARTTS, Carramar.

15 Nov 2016: Research to Practice Forum on Refugee Health, organised by Multicultural Health SESLHD in partnership with RHS. See above for more details. Contact Patty Loukas for details. RSVP by 7 November 2016. Wolli Creek, Sydney.


17-18 Nov 2016: Enhancing Outcomes in Complex Trauma: The Integration of Psychotherapy with Evidence-Based Neurobiological Methods, STARTTS Clinical Seminar, 9.30am-5pm, Wesley Conference Centre, Sydney CBD.

9 Nov 2016: Clinical master class presentation – Group therapy for people affected by sexual assault, 6-8pm (in person and webinar). STARTTS, Carramar.

11 Nov 2016: Working effectively with refugees one-day workshop, $149/$99 STARTTS, Carramar.

24 Nov 2016: Refugee Women’s Health Network. Guest speaker: Andrea Pritchard from STARTTS on Contact the RWHN Convenor for details.


5-7 Dec 2016: IRCT’s General Assembly and Scientific Symposium: Delivering on the promise of the Right to Rehabilitation, Mexico City.


Publications & research

A sample of published articles is below. Links to abstracts are provided where full texts are not available for free.


Benson J, Abdul Rahim R, et al (2016) Newly arrived refugee children with Helicobacter pylori are thinner than their non-infected counterparts, Aust Jn of Primary Health,
Beiser M & Hou F (2016) Mental Health Effects of Premigration Trauma and Postmigration Discrimination on Refugee Youth in Canada, *Jn Nervous and Mental Disease, in press*


McGraw C (2016) This doctor, I not trust him, I’m not safe: The perceptions of mental health and services by unaccompanied refugee adolescents, *Primary Health Care*, 26(5)


If you have a health-related refugee item for the next Refugee Health E-news please contact: NSW Refugee Health Service (02) 8778 0770 or Cathy.Preston-Thomas@sswahs.nsw.gov.au.

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