



Immigrant health service 2012

Department of General Medicine

Background

2012 saw major changes in Australian policy related to refugees and asylum seekers. Increasing numbers of asylum seekers arriving by boat led to the 'Report of the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers', released on 13 August 2012. Subsequently, the Commonwealth Government has accepted many of the report's recommendations, including an increase in the annual Humanitarian intake (to 20,000 people), additional family sponsorship places for people of refugee-background, the reintroduction of offshore processing, the introduction of a 'no advantage' principle, and strengthening of regional processing arrangements. Other key changes in refugee policy are: the increased use of community detention, especially for families, and changes to the health requirement of the Migration act.

These changes mean a dramatic increase in refugee and asylum seekers arriving in Victoria, increased complexity in clients' housing, visa status, work rights, and healthcare access, and increased numbers of people with disability. The flow-on effects for health and service provision have been immense, with a rapid increase in demand for post-arrival health screening, and challenges faced by the asylum seeker population. In 2012, we have seen greater numbers of people from Iran, Afghanistan, and Burma.

Key Achievements in 2012

- **812 patient contact episodes in RCH Immigrant health clinic, with a further 420 episodes of patient contact by the Fellows in their other clinical roles**
- **Development of a clinician configurable electronic health record, in collaboration with the four specialist refugee clinics in Victoria**
- **4 publications, 3 further publications accepted, including the Australian and New Zealand Position Statement on Vitamin D**
- **Development of a research clearing house**
- **5 Policy submissions**
- **50 education sessions delivered, including 4 invited conference presentations**
- **Maternal Child Health Nursing Refugee Health learning needs analysis and education program delivery**
- **3 new Clinical guidelines**
- **Curriculum development for the Masters in Refugee Health (Nursing) at Monash University**
- **Pilot mentoring program with medical students from the Western Clinical School, University of Melbourne**
- **Development of a secondary consult model with RCH Integrated Mental Health Service, due to start 2013**
- **Implementation of the CAREHR system at Royal Melbourne Hospital – a fully configurable electronic health record, with evaluation of workflow at RCH prior to implementation**

Service model

The immigrant health service includes a weekly outpatient clinic, inpatient and outpatient consultations, telephone and email advice, and affiliations with the Victorian paediatric tuberculosis service, the RCH education Institute, and the Western Region health Centre vitamin D service. The clinic provides both post-arrival health screening and tertiary consultation service on refugee health issues with increasing focus on cross-cultural educational/developmental assessment.

Staff

Position	Staff member	EFT
Clinic coordinator	Helen Milton	0.4
Medical lead	Georgie Paxton	0.2
Consultants	Georgie Paxton	Fee for service model
	Andrea Smith	
	Colette Reveley	
Fellow	Anthea Rhodes	0.4 (+ 0.1 WRHC)
Fellow	Vanessa Clifford	0.2
Dental therapist	Tatiana Polizzi	0.05
Community worker	Nagaha Idris	0.05
Research nurse	Katrina Sangster	0.1
Volunteers	Kirsten Gordon	Volunteer
	Adam Read	

Key points - clinic demographics

- Clinic attendance rates were 88% (812 attendances of 921 bookings)
- There were 812 patient attendances in the IHC in 2012 (261 new patient bookings). There were a further 420 patient contact episodes, predominantly by the Fellows, Dr Anthea Rhodes and Dr Vanessa Clifford, at both the Western Region Health Centre and the TB Clinic. There were 31 additional patient consultations (direct and by telephone/email)
- We saw children and young people from 31 countries of birth, most commonly Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, Iran, and Burma
- We saw families speaking 33 languages, most commonly Somali, Dinka, Amharic, Karen, Oromo and Persian
- Interpreters were required for 67% of consultations, an increase from 2011.

Affiliated services/work

- Tuberculosis clinic: Dr Anthea Rhodes/ Dr Vanessa Clifford
- Western Region Health Centre refugee clinic: Dr Anthea Rhodes /Dr David Tickell
- Darebin Community Health Centre: Dr Kate Thomson
- Craigieburn Community Health Centre: Dr Jo Fraser
- Dandenong Hospital Refugee Health Clinic: Dr Sarah Hanieh
- Royal Melbourne Hospital/University of Melbourne Department of Medicine (Windermere Fellowship): Dr Georgie Paxton

Education/presentations

In 2012, we delivered 50 education sessions to over 2800 health providers, on a diverse range of topics (AR 24, GP 24, joint 2). This figure includes:

- **4 invited conference presentations** (GP, AR)
- **2 Grand Rounds** (GP) and the **Clinical Public Health Seminar** (MCRI)
- **35 external presentations**
- A **targeted education module for Maternal and Child Nurses** (AR), delivered across 10 metropolitan and regional LGAs, and a presentation at the Statewide conference (to over 1000 MCH nurses)
- **Health education for refugee young people** – 2 streams over the year
- **Establishment of a mentoring program for Western Clinical School medical students** (AR, GP) after initiation of a mentoring program where the medical students mentor refugee youth (collaboration with Yarra Police, YMCA Victoria and University of Melbourne)
- **Development of course materials for Master of Nursing Monash University** (GP) 2-week module on child and adolescent refugee health

Research

Development/publication - Australian Refugee Research Clearing House (AR, VC, GP)
see: http://rch.org.au/immigranthealth/research.cfm?doc_id=15303

Publications

- **Paxton GA**, Kay MP and Correa-Velez I. Lost and found: A strategy for improving ascertainment of Australians from refugee backgrounds in population datasets. *Med J Aust* 2012; 197 (10): 552-553.
- **Rhodes A**, Sciberras E, Oberklaid F, South M, Davies S, Efron D. Unmet developmental, behavioral, and psychosocial needs in children attending pediatric outpatient clinics. *J Dev Behav Pediatr*. 2012 Jul;33(6):469-78.
- **Paxton GA, Sangster KJ**, Maxwell EL, McBride CR and Drewe RH. Post-arrival health screening in Karen refugees in Australia. *PLoS One* 2012;7(5):e38194
- Colucci E, Szwarc J, Minas H, **Paxton G**, Guerra C. The utilisation of mental health services by children and young people from a refugee background: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Culture and Mental Health*. 2012;DOI:10.1080/17542863.2012.713371.

Accepted for publication

- **Paxton GA**, Teale GR, Nowson CA, Mason RS, McGrath JJ, Thompson MJ, Siafarikas A, Rodda CP and Munns CF. Vitamin D and health in pregnancy, infants, children and adolescents in Australia and New Zealand: a position statement. *Med J Aust* 198(3): 142-143 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=23418693>
- Osteoporosis Australia Summit. Building Healthy Bones Throughout Life: An evidence-informed strategy to prevent osteoporosis in Australia. *Med J Aust*. *MJA Open* 2013; 2 Suppl 1: 1. doi:10.5694/mjao12.11363
- Jimenez G, Alex G, **Paxton G**, Connell T, Hardikar W. (2013) B Alert: Hepatitis B virus infection in children in Victoria. *J Paediatr Child Health* 49(3): E213-216 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=23480052>

Other areas of research

- **Developing an clinician configurable electronic health record** (GP)– Mixed methods, evaluation and systems development (Department of Business and Innovation funding - BEIP project grant and Windermere Foundation fellowship funding, collaboration with Royal Melbourne, Dandenong and Geelong Hospitals)
- **Safe prescribing for patients with low health literacy** (software development, GP)
- **TB screening in a community cohort of Karen refugees in Victoria** (GP, KS)
- **Review of additional language acquisition** (VC, AR, GP)
- **Evaluation of MCH Nurse workforce training needs** on refugee health (AR, GP)
- **Scoping traditional medicine use in Burmese communities** (AR, GP)
- **Barriers to Mental Health Service Use** (GP)

Website

- Located here: http://rch.org.au/immigranthealth/index.cfm?doc_id=10575 around 3000 hits/year
- New guideline: [Lead and Arsenic Contamination of Burmese traditional medicines](#), with background information on Pb and As
- New guideline: [Asylum seekers](#)
- New background information: [Recent policy changes](#)
- Revision of [translated resources](#) webpage

Policy

Presentation to Refugee Resettlement Advisory Committee, Parliament House (GP)
Canberra, Feb 2012

Invited attendance at **DIAC Departure Health Check Conference, Sydney** (GP), Feb 2012

Advice to Department of Immigration and Citizenship on **Health Screening Guidelines for Minors in Detention**, (GP) via Detention Health Advisory Group, accepted in policy Feb 2012

Participation in **Victorian Refugee Health Network (GP)** ongoing

Participation in the **Refugee Health Network of Australia (RHeANA) (GP)**

Participation in **advisory group to Victorian Government Refugee health and wellbeing action plan** (GP)

Contribution to briefing paper prepared for the Minister for Health, Dr David Davis
September 2012 (GP) – complex care issues in refugee background clients

Submission to Senate Inquiry into the Migration Amendment (Health Care for Asylum seekers) Bill 2012, with Victorian Refugee Health Network (GP)

Submission to 9th Edition of Immunisation Handbook (with RHeANA) (GP)

Revision Victorian Government information/guidelines on high dose vitamin D (GP)

Review of Northern Hospital policy on vitamin D in post partum women and their infants.

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