



Immigrant health service 2017

Department of General Medicine

Key achievements in 2017

Clinical care

- **2026 direct care episodes for 1037 patients and around 110 clinical consultations;** including work at the Royal Children's Hospital (Immigrant health clinic and tuberculosis clinic) and outreach to northern, western and eastern Melbourne.
 - **Consolidation of paediatric refugee health at Craigieburn Health Service** - fortnightly clinic, 164 attendances for 102 patients, booked to Apr 2018 (TV).
 - **New outreach service - Darebin Community Health Centre** - monthly clinic from May 2017 - 58 attendances for 42 patients (TV).
 - **Increased Tuberculosis services** - 480 care episodes (vs. 265 in 2016) (TV, RH, ST, HG).
 - **New mental health service** - psychiatrist in Immigrant Health Service from late Oct - Dec 2017, 13 attendances for 10 patients, 13 additional consultations.

Education

- **54 education sessions delivered to around 2330 people**
 - 37 external sessions, 6 conference presentations, lectures at Monash University, Deakin University and Melbourne University, 16 internal sessions (TV, RH, SS, GP KK).
- **7 general practice visits** in the northern region.
- **New mental health webpage, 10 updated webpages:** Initial assessment, Policy, Hepatitis B, Tuberculosis, STI, Syphilis, NDIS, Asylum seekers, Translated resources, Talk bank (talks for other providers to deliver) (RH, TV, GP).
- **Health pathways** - child refugee health, refugee health assessment - published late 2017 (GP, KK).

Research and publications

- **Research** - Audit of Syrian/Iraqi cohort, audit health needs of children in held detention; Schistosoma infection - outcomes with treatment; Developing protocols for analysis of language services.
- **Publications** - 3 peer reviewed publications, 1 accepted for publication, 1 manuscript in draft (all).
- **Research clearing house** updated - 57 new articles added from 2016 - mid 2017 (TV).
- **Promoting Refugee Health Handbook** - child/adolescent summaries and longer chapter (GP, KK).

Policy

- **Contribution to primary care assessment template development** and Promoting Refugee Health handbook as above.
- **Immunisation working group:** Chair (GP), program logic day, four working group meetings; associated meeting updated fact sheets, policy analysis accepted for publication.
- **Adolescent Family Violence Roundtable** - through Victorian Children's Council May 2017 (GP).
- **Disability** - AMES disability network, meetings with early intervention providers, case workers, education/updates for allied health on disability, contribution to the CCYP session.

Reference groups, advisory roles, committees

- **Minister's Council on Asylum Seekers and Detention (MCASD), Independent Health Advisor Panel,** Department of Home Affairs (GP).
- **Commission for Children and Young People,** Victoria: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (Victorian Government) (GP).
- **Victorian Refugee Health Network (VRHN)** (GP, TV, RH).
- **Outer Northern Refugee Health Network** (TV).
- **AMES Disability Action Group** (TV).

Background

2017 saw the ongoing arrival of refugees from Syria and Iraq; increased settlement in northern metropolitan Melbourne, an increasing number of 'linked' entrants - sponsored by family in Australia, and ongoing uncertainty for our asylum seeker children and families, who have now been in Australia for 4-5 years.

We saw increasing numbers of children arriving with complex medical needs and/or disability, and a number of children with immediate/acute healthcare needs on arrival. Challenges included the quality of post arrival health screening, school enrolment for new arrivals (with long waits for language school places in early 2017) and acute trauma presentations.

During 2017 the most frequent source countries for refugees and asylum seekers to Australia were:

- **Offshore Humanitarian Programme** – Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Burma, Iran
- **People in community detention** – Iran, stateless, Sri Lanka

Policy changes influencing our work in 2017 included:

- Large numbers of new arrivals in the second half of 2016 and early 2017, predominantly from Syria and Iraq.
- The rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) across Melbourne, notably the northern and eastern metropolitan areas.
- The August 2017 announcement of the 'final departure bridging visa E' (FDBVE) for medical transfers from Nauru to Australia - while the initial implementation was directed to adults, we saw significant impact on families' wellbeing.
- The Nauruan Government Refugee Status Determination Process for medical transfers, which also commenced around August 2017.
- The October 2017 deadline for people seeking asylum to submit their protection claims that was announced in May 2017.
- The (then) Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) health examination requirements for the legacy caseload in early 2017, with assessments to be completed through BUPA.
- The change in the settlement contract in October 2017 - with clinical impact through the loss of offshore health summaries (no longer available under the new contract).
- Reduction in the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) Program from late 2017.

Our focus through 2017 has been clinical care, education, capacity building, research and policy work to promote the health of children and families who are refugee background or seeking asylum.

Service model

The immigrant health service includes a weekly outpatient clinic, inpatient and outpatient consultations, and telephone and email advice. The service provides post-arrival health (including dental) screening and immunisation catch-up where needed (often completing screening commenced in primary care) and a tertiary consultation service on child refugee health issues.

Our clinic model includes the use of the CAReHR electronic health record in certain clinics, integrated use of interpreting services, picture-based prescribing where needed, contact with schools by the team's affiliated teacher, and weekly meetings - case discussion alternating with mental health secondary consult meetings. We received additional psychiatry services across October - December 2017, although there is uncertainty around this model in 2018 with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services redirecting funding.

Our team provides specialist paediatric refugee health services in the west (CoHealth in West Footscray), east (EACH Community Health Service in Ringwood), and we have now consolidated clinical services in Melbourne's north with a fortnightly fellow clinic at Craigieburn Health Service. In May 2017 we commenced monthly clinical services at Darebin Community Health with Dr Anthea Rhodes and Dr Lester Mascarenhas.

Staff

In 2017, the immigrant health team consisted of four consultants: Dr Georgie Paxton, Dr Andrea Smith, Dr Hamish Graham, and Dr Shidan Tosif, and two fellow positions filled by: Dr Tom Volkman, Dr Rachel Heenan and Dr Simon Stokes. Dr Heenan has continued in a part time research role (remotely) in the latter half of 2017. Referrals to the TB service have increased substantially, and the clinicians from the Immigrant Health Service, including the paediatric fellows, have supported this demand.

Position	Staff member	EFT
Clinic coordinator	Helen Milton	0.5
Medical lead	Georgie Paxton GP	0.5
Mental health lead	Tiba Maloof	0.1 (end October - December)
Consultants	Andrea Smith AS	0.1
	Hamish Graham HG	0.1
	Shidan Tosif ST	0.1
Fellows	Tom Volkman TV	0.6 (February - January)
	Rachel Heenan RH	0.8 (February - November)
	Simon Stokes SS	0.5 (August - January)
Dental therapist	Tatiana Polizzi	0.1
Community worker	Nagaha Idris	0.05
Research nurse	Katrina Sangster	0.2
Teacher	Erin O'Rourke	(RCH Education)
Volunteers	Sylvie Bui Hoang	Volunteer
	Jenny Kendrick	Volunteer
	Yasmin Abubaker	Volunteer

Affiliated services

- **RCH tuberculosis clinic:** Hamish Graham, Shidan Tosif, Tom Volkman, Rachel Heenan, Simon Stokes
- **Cohealth**, West Footscray: Rachel Heenan/Simon Stokes, Jane Standish, Merryn Redenbach
- **EACH Social and Community Health**, Ringwood East: Georgie Paxton, Shidan Tosif
- **Craigieburn Health Services**, Craigieburn: Tom Volkman.
- **Darebin Community Health Centre:** Dr Anthea Rhodes, Dr Tom Volkman.
- **Dandenong Hospital Refugee Health Clinic:** Dr Danni Bao.

Clinical care

In 2017 areas of clinical focus were completion of post-arrival screening, asylum seeker healthcare, disability, child development, and mental health concerns. Overall, we have seen markedly increased clinical complexity, and been involved in a number of critical cases, including some requiring lengthy admissions and intensive care unit (ICU) level care.

In 2017, we provided **2026 direct clinical care episodes to 1037 patients.**

- RCH Immigrant health clinic – 882 attendances, 385 patients including 149 new patients, (TV, RH, GP, AS, ST, HG, SS); psychiatry 13 attendances for 10 patients, (Tiba Maloof- TM)
- RCH Tuberculosis clinic – 410 attendances for 240 patients (TV, RH, HG, ST, SS)
- CoHealth Footscray clinic – 319 attendances, 201 patients (RH, SS)
- EACH outreach clinic – 110 attendances, 67 patients (GP, ST)
- Craigieburn outreach clinic- 164 attendances, 102 patients (TV)
- Darebin community clinic- 58 attendances, 42 patients (TV)

Clinic	Attendances - fellows	Attendances - consultants
RCH Immigrant health Clinic	317	565 (GP, AS, ST, HG)
RCH Immigrant health - psychiatry	-	13 (TM)
RCH TB Clinic	232	248 (HG, ST)
CoHealth	319	-
EACH outreach clinic	-	110 (GP, ST)
Craigieburn outreach clinic	164	-
Darebin outreach clinic	58	-
Total	2013	

Demographics

- **Clinic attendance rates were 86%** (759 attendances of 886 bookings)
- We saw children and young people from **more than 30 countries of birth**, most commonly from Iran, Burma, Syria, Malaysia, Iraq, Sudan, and Australian-born children from refugee background families.
- We saw families speaking **33 languages**, most commonly Arabic, Farsi, Somali, Burmese languages (Karen, Chin dialects, Burmese) and Dinka.
- **Interpreters assisted with 82% of consultations** - increasing from 76% in 2016. Interpreting requirements have been high over the last 4 years, after a nadir of 68% in 2013.

Other clinical activities

We have provided more than 110 additional clinical consultations in 2017:

- Hospital inpatient consultations: 26 (TV, RH, GP)
- Psychiatry consultations: 13 (TM)
- Telephone and email consultations:
 - Nurses (refugee health nurses, school nurses): around 35 with liaison
 - Medical practitioners (GP, IHMS, and specialists) – around 15 with liaison
 - Case Managers (Settlement and Refugee Minor Program) – around 20
- Care team meetings (DIBP and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – 5 (HG, ST, GP).

Current clinical issues

Ongoing care and support of asylum seeker children/families - we provide care for a cohort of children seeking asylum, including a number of children within families transferred from Nauru for medical care. These children arrived in Australia 4-5 years ago, and many now have younger siblings born in Australia. The health assessments for the legacy caseload in early 2017 (February - April) had substantial impact, with many families receiving letters from DIBP and facing out of pocket costs for BUPA health assessments - we worked with DIBP to support previous health assessments being accepted. Submitting protection claims (by the October 2017 deadline) appears to have been a positive process for most families, representing a step forward in their refugee status determination process. We are now starting to see children/families granted temporary protection visas, although we have not yet seen regional movement with the granting of safe haven enterprise (SHEV) visas, or families with final negative decisions.

New arrival children from Syria/Iraq - we saw large number of arrivals from Syria and Iraq from late 2016 until mid 2017, settling predominantly in the Hume area of Melbourne. Emergent issues were:

- **Delays in school enrolment**, with some children waiting for language school places and remaining home for periods of months. We raised this issue with Northern Region Department of Education and Training (DET); meeting with DET, Foundation House and AMES in early 2017 and providing education

for caseworkers at Spectrum and AMES in early 2017. School enrolment improved in the second half of 2017.

- **Critical medical needs on arrival** - A number of children arrived with critical medical needs and required hospital admission; a small number required ICU admission. Of this group, few had medical alerts from their pre-departure screening. We provided inpatient consultations, linking RCH units with settlement providers, and provided feedback to DIBP with consent to inform the offshore screening and transfer process.
- **Disability** - we have seen increasing numbers of children referred with complex disability. Integrating these children into the wider disability care framework has been challenging, and also occurs in the setting of transition to the NDIS.
- **Post-arrival screening** - Most children have been linked with primary care after arrival, however there are substantial challenges with post-arrival screening and we are frequently completing the post-arrival health assessment. While patients at EACH are linked with the Refugee Health Nurses, our observation has been that very few other patients have seen refugee health program staff - all clinicians in the service have noted this gap.

Mental health - There has been an ongoing burden of mental health issues in our asylum seeker cohort and we have observed a number of acute presentations in new Syrian/Iraqi arrivals. The secondary mental health consultations have been ongoing (now since 2013). In mid-October 2017, Dr Tiba Maloof (psychiatry) commenced work within the service, providing direct and indirect consultations.

Education and presentations

In 2017, we delivered 54 education sessions to around 2330 participants from health, education, and community organisations on a diverse range of topics. This figure includes 37 external presentations across Melbourne, 6 conference presentations, and a program of ongoing education on working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities for RCH volunteers and nurses, delivered by Katrina Sangster. We provided sessions at Monash University, Deakin University and University of Melbourne to different course groups, and 8 sessions to more than 240 participants in different groups (clinical, caseworkers, education and community) in the northern region.

Education sessions and conferences in 2017:

1. 11/1/2017 Box Hill Hospital paediatric registrar teaching, (KK, 10 attendees)
2. 16/1/2017 Disability and school enrolment - Spectrum, AMES, Dallas (GP, 40)
3. 3/2/2017 Craigieburn Health Services - refugee health issues (KK, 16)
4. 13/2/2017 Podcast interview for Cultural Diversity week (RCH intranet) (KS)
5. 15/2/2017 RCH Developmental Medicine (TV, GP 15)
6. 15/2/2017 Monash University Masters of Public Health (KK, 16)
7. 16/2/2017 Neurology department meeting - Neuro-disability issues (TV, 16)
8. 22/2/2017 Community Child Health - refugee issues (TV, 30)
9. 22/2/2017 Community Child Health - English as an additional language (GP, 30)
10. 6/3/2017 RCH Allied Health (Occupational therapy and physiotherapy) (TV, RH 16)
11. 9/3/2017 Collingwood Women's group - brain development in children (TV, 14)
12. 22/3/2017 Red Cross Facilitated workshop - young people (GP, 30)
13. 24/3/2017 RCH Cultural Diversity week forum panel (KS, 80)
14. 28/3/2017 RCH@Home (Family Choice program) (RH, TV 10)
15. 29/3/2017 RCH Emergency Department registrars (TV, 11)
16. 30/3/2017 Master of Nursing students, University of Melbourne (KS, 10)
17. 3/4/2017 **World Congress Public Health - Immunisation (GP, 40)**
18. 4/4/2017 Deakin Medical students (TV, 16)
19. 12/4/2017 Eastern paediatric registrar teaching - Box Hill (TV, 7)
20. 7/5/2017 **RACP Congress: CCCH satellite day, Trauma in children (GP, 60)**

21. 8/5/2017	RCH Volunteers (Caring for CALD families) (KS, 20)
22. 9/5/2017	RACP Congress, panel on ethical issues for physicians (GP, 300)
23. 9/5/2017	RCH General medicine handover (RH, TV 16)
24. 11/5/2017	Monash University: first year medical students (GP, 250)
25. 12/5/2017	RCH volunteers: Caring for CALD families (KS, 15)
26. 18/5/2017	Foundation House: Nursing update (Refugee health) (TV, 23)
27. 18/5/2017	Foundation House: Nursing update (Development) (GP, 23)
28. 24/5/2017	Eastern paediatric junior medical staff - Angliss Hospital (TV, 4)
29. 26/5/2017	University of Melbourne: Health and human rights (GP, 30)
30. 3/6/2017	Paediatric update: Refugee health (for paediatricians and trainees) (GP, 250)
31. 6/6/2017	Noble Park English Language School professional development (GP, 150)
32. 29/6/2017	RCH General medicine Friday meeting (GP, RH 35)
33. 18/7/2017	Monash Health: GP webinar in refugee health (TV, online)
34. 18/7/2017	South East Melbourne PHN: webinar immunisation with Monash Health (RH, online)
35. 25/7/2017	Frankston hospital: junior medical staff teaching (RH, 10)
36. 27/7/2017	Schools and refugee health - northern region (TV, 80)
37. 27/7/2017	Schools and refugee health - northern region (GP, 80)
38. 2/8/2017	Northern hospital children's ward and social workers (TV, 10)
39. 3/8/2017	Strathmore high school (GP, 40)
40. 10/8/2017	RCH Social work department (TV, 28)
41. 17/8/17	Principals breakfast - Northern Region DET (GP, 30)
42. 25/8/2017	Monash University: Health Interpreting short course (TV, 40)
43. 2/9/2017	Monash Hospital: GP education day (KK, 30)
44. 4/9/2017	Mental health working group Travancore - Syrian Refugees (TV, 5)
45. 20/9/2017	RACGP refugee health webinar (TV, 33)
46. 21/9/2017	Monash University: Faculty of Medicine webinar (KK, 10)
47. 1/10/2017	CxU medical student global health conference (TV, 17)
48. 10/10/2017	RCH junior resident medical officer teaching (KK, 25)
49. 17/10/2017	Holy Child Dallas primary school parents group (TV, 21)
50. 18/10/2017	Northern Health paediatric team teaching (TV, 13)
51. 1/11/2017	Allied health disability network training (TV, 15)
52. 24/11/2017	CMY conference (GP, 150)
53. 26/11/17	Australian Association for Infant Mental Health (AAIMH) conference (GP, 150)
54. 27/11/17	Western Health refugee education day (TV, 45)

Capacity building

Linking with other services - we have tried to assist in supporting primary care capacity in refugee and asylum seeker health, although the Optimise Project, Primary Health Network (PHN) and Foundation House are providing multiple education sessions and we are aware of coordination issues and overload for GPs. Areas of work include:

- **Circulation of a letter of introduction to general practices in the northern and western region** May 2017 to introduce the Refugee Health Fellows through the NWMPHN and member practices.
- **Northwest Melbourne PHN** – Ongoing community-based education for general practitioners with 7 practice visits in 2017 (KK, TV)
- **Pro-forma on health screening** - listing appropriate screening tests for children and adults arriving from Syria and Iraq - see <https://www.rch.org.au/immigranthealth/>
- **Screening test calculator** - we are developing a web-based screening test calculator reflecting the 2016 ASID/RHEANA guidelines (RH, GP, with thanks to Charlie Heenan)
- **Health pathways** - developed two health pathways with Eastern Melbourne PHN - Refugee Health Assessment and Child Refugee Health (in 2016) - published late 2017.

- **Promoting Refugee Health Handbook**– provided content expertise on child and adolescent health to the Victorian Refugee Health Network (KK, GP).
- **Refugee health assessment template** – for primary care/medical software - provided content expertise on child and adolescent health to the Victorian Refugee Health Network (TV).

Health services improvement within RCH

- **Draft protocols and grant applications** for audit of language services at RCH, and nursing perspectives on working with interpreters and clinical outcomes at RCH (KS, KK, RH, GP)
- **Education sessions** - we provided 15 sessions at RCH, across junior medical, registrar, fellow, and consultant medical staff levels; to allied health staff, and the social work department, to RCH volunteers, and to the neurology, developmental medicine, emergency, community child health and mental health departments.

Research

Peer reviewed publications

- Chaves N, **Paxton GA**, Biggs BA et al. Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases and Refugee Health Network of Australia Recommendations for Health Assessment for People from Refugee-Like Backgrounds: An Abridged Outline. *Med J Aust* April 2017; 206 (7): 310-315.
- Minhas R, **Graham H**, Jegathesan T, et al. Supporting the developmental health of refugee children and youth. *Paediatr Child Health* (April 2017) 22 (2): 68-71.
- **Kiang K**, Elia S, **Paxton G**. No Jab No Record. Catch-up vaccination of children in immigration detention. *J Paediatr Child Health*, 2018 Jan 3. doi: 10.1111/jpc.13822. [Epub ahead of print].
- **Paxton G**, Spink P, Danchin M, Tyrrell L, Taylor C, Casey S, and **Graham H**. Catching-up with catch-up – a policy analysis of immunisation for refugees and asylum seekers in Victoria. Accepted *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, December 2017

Other research and project work

Research clearing house: provides a systematic collection of Australian refugee health-related research – more than 57 new peer-reviewed articles from 2016 –current were identified and added (TV).

Audit: Syrian and Iraqi arrivals – screening results and service provision. Manuscript ready for submission to *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health* (all, led by RH)

Audit: Schistosoma serology and impact of treatment. Manuscript being prepared for submission to *Journal of Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease* (TV, VC, GP)

Audit of physical and mental health in asylum seeker children in detention (ST, team)

Data linkage - Hospitals, Settlement and Immigration linkage project, collaboration across Victorian Department of Health, Australian Department of Health, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP), Department of Social Services (DSS) and Australian Bureau of Statistics - AIHW Ethics approval received November 2016, progress halted after issues arising with Border Force Act (AIHW not listed for release of data from DIBP/DHA).

Committees, advisory roles, meetings

In addition to our regular clinical meetings, network and committee meetings (see following), we have attended or convened approximately 26 meetings with partner or community organizations to discuss service delivery, collaborations, policy issues and other aspects of refugee and asylum seeker health. Areas of focus in 2017 were extending connections to northern region health services, addressing barriers to school enrolment, immunisation and disability service access.

Regular clinical meetings

- Weekly supervision meetings with fellows
- Fortnightly clinical audit meeting
- Fortnightly secondary consultations: RCH Integrated Mental Health and RCH teacher.

Other meetings

1. 12-Jan-17 Spectrum and AMES case workers - school enrolment, disability services access (GP, SO)
2. 30-Jan-17 NW Melbourne PHN - general practice educational planning (KK)
3. 3-Feb-17 Louise Sharkey, Plenty Valley Community Health and CHS staff (TV, GP)
4. 16-Feb-17 Refugee health nurses (TV, SO)
5. 28-Feb-17 Immunisation program logic group (GP)
6. 28-Feb-17 Refugee health fellow meeting (TV, RH)
7. 06-Mar-17 Northern Region Department of Education and Training (DET) (GP, TV)
8. 21-Mar-17 Spectrum settlement - school entry and disability (GP, TV, RH)
9. 28-Mar-17 Melbourne Children's Campus Review (GP)
10. 12-Apr-17 ECIS - early intervention meeting (TV)
11. 11-Apr-17 Refugee health fellow meeting (TV, RH)
12. 3-May-17 Immunisation - planning (GP)
13. 10-May-17 Meeting with Sydney Children's Hospital Network refugee fellow (TV, RH)
14. 12-May-17 DHHS Adolescent family violence roundtable (GP)
15. 23-May-17 VHRN roundtable on refugee disability needs assessment (RH)
16. 31-May-17 Professor David Coghill (RCH), incorporating mental health services into IHC (GP)
17. 13-Jun-17 DHHS and refugee health fellows biannual meeting (GP, RH)
18. 16-Jun-17 Immunisation meeting with Asylum Seekers Resource Centre (ASRC) (GP, RH)
19. 28-Jul-17 Immunisation meeting ASRC (GP, RH)
20. 29-Aug-17 On-arrival health template meeting (TV)
21. 15-Sep-17 NWPHN general practice education meeting (TV)
22. 20-Sep-17 General practice engagement in the north of Melbourne - Foundation House (GP, TV)
23. 3-Oct-17 Refugee health fellow meeting teleconference (TV, SS)
24. 11-Oct-17 Immunisation planning meeting (GP)
25. 24-Oct-17 Immunisation meeting ASRC (GP)
26. 21-Nov-17 DHHS and refugee health fellows biannual meeting (GP, SS, TV)

Committees, reference groups and working groups

MCASD – Minister's Council on Asylum Seekers and Detention, DHA, May 2015 – 18 (GP)

- Quarterly meetings Canberra
- Detention visit - Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre/Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation - March and June 2017
- Chair Victorian Detention Community Consultation Group - quarterly meetings

Independent Health Advisor Panel – DHA, Oct 2014 – ongoing (GP)

- Quarterly meetings.

Health Sub-Committee to the Joint Advisory Committee for Nauru Regional Processing Arrangements Department of Immigration and Border Protection, December 2013 – April 2017.

Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Strategic Planning Advisory Committee, Mar 2014 – ongoing (GP)

- Bimonthly meetings.

Victorian Refugee Health Network (VRHN) (GP, TV)

- Quarterly meetings.

Immunisation Working Group (GP, Chair)

- Quarterly meetings.

Refugee Health Network of Australia (RHeNA) (GP)

- Bimonthly meetings.

Paediatric Refugee Health Clinical Group (all) –

- Bimonthly meetings commencing September 2017.

RCH Cultural Diversity Working Group (KS)

- Monthly meetings.

RCH Cultural Diversity in Mental Health Committee (TV, RH, SS)

- Quarterly meetings.

AMES Disability Action Group (TV)

- Bimonthly meetings.

Outer North Regional Health Network (TV)

- Bimonthly meetings.

Policy

We remain involved in policy work at local, state and Commonwealth level, including through the committees and working groups listed above. Areas of policy focus in 2017 were:

Post-arrival health screening: For several years there have been challenges with post arrival health screening in primary care, this was ongoing for the new arrival cohorts. We undertook a formal audit to scope the nature of the issues, confirming that almost no children had recommended screening, and few had engaged with the refugee health program. We provided direct education, developed interim screening tip sheets (for children and adults), ensured our own web-based guidelines were up to date, undertook development of a screening test calculator (work ongoing) and provided content expertise to the Promoting Refugee Health Guide, the GP assessment template and Health pathways.

Immunisation: GP is chairing the Department of Health and Human Services Immunisation Working Group, supporting DHHS funded catch-up immunisation program in the Hume/Whittlesea and City of Greater Dandenong local government areas, and at the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

- Briefing on offshore vaccination protocols prepared for DIBP February 2017
- Fact sheets developed through the previous working group were updated in 2017
- Policy paper based on the previous working group needs analysis revised, submitted May 2017, and accepted for publication in December 2017
- Review of federal Department of Health fact sheets on catch-up vaccination for humanitarian entrants June 2017

Legacy caseload health assessment: In early 2017, DIBP sent pro-forma letters to asylum seeker clients requesting health examinations as part of the legacy caseload processing – to be completed at BUPA Visa Medical Services. RCH IHS liaised with DIBP to clarify the requirements and obtained agreement that previous test results will be accepted by DIBP, we also published this information and the process for submitting previous results on website.

School access in the northern region: This was an emergent issue in early 2017, our response included:

- Education to case workers on schools, disability and development – and follow-up/email summaries
- Foundation House training on child development and learning assessment for refugee health nurses
- Engaged with DET and Foundation House and met directly
- Submitted a brief to Northern Region DET on appropriate year level placement for refugee students of refugee-background

Disability: supporting children and families to access disability services is an ongoing challenge, and is more complex with NDIS transition. We ensured our web based resources were up to date, developed an NDIS support letter template, provided background to the CCYP, DHHS, and RHEANA on access issues, and participated in the AMES Disability Action Network, and the work being completed by Foundation House.

Commission for Children and Young People: Submission of case example for the CCYP submission to the Migration inquiry (GP) and regular attendance at meetings.

Adolescent family violence round table through the Victorian Children's Council - May 2017 (GP)

Final departure BVE - with the announcement of the new FD-BVE on 27 August 2017 we drafted a summary of issues arising for the VRHN, participated in the cross-sector teleconference (31 August 2017), provided information back through the IHAP, and helped draft a letter to the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist around concerns arising (5 September 2017).

Sentinel events: feedback to DIBP about 'near misses', of children with serious medical conditions who had increased medical needs upon arrival to Australia, and did not have appropriate health alerts.

Website

- **New page – Mental Health** (includes referral resources) - with review by RCH Mental health
- Updated - Initial assessment, Sexually transmitted infections, Syphilis, Tuberculosis (to reflect ASID/RHeaNA screening guidelines)
- Updated - Hepatitis B (added clinical background on request from GPs via the VRHN)
- Updated - Asylum Seekers
- Updated - Talk Bank (presentations for other providers)
- Updated - Policy
- Updated - NDIS (to reflect evolving operational guidelines and include draft support letter)
- Updated - Translated Resources

Future directions

- Supporting primary care – as settlement of Syrian and Iraqi refugees progresses, especially in northern Melbourne with our partner organisations
- Assisting regional education provision with help of our affiliated clinicians – anticipated changes in regional settlement related to Safe Haven Enterprise Visas
- Ongoing advocacy for improved screening procedures in primary care in Victoria, including access to tuberculosis screening
- Adapting to the NDIS roll-out across Melbourne, and informing work on CALD communities and new arrivals referred to NDIS
- Study trip to North America with presentation of statistics at North American Refugee Health Conference and visiting tertiary paediatric refugee services to information share regarding education, capacity building and cultural diversity and interpreting education/work practices (TV)

On behalf of RCH Immigrant health - thank-you to our patients and their families for working with our service and helping us to understand more about health and healthcare; we are indebted to our interpreting colleagues, and would like to acknowledge their skills, professionalism, support, and essential contribution to our work; and we would like to thank our mental health colleagues for their support and advice. We are grateful to the Department of General Medicine, and to the Department of Health, Victoria, who provide funding for our service.

*Georgie Paxton, Tom Volkman, Simon Stokes and Rachel Heenan
January 2018*