

Title

Refugee health: addressing public health needs

In their editorial, Arnold and colleagues outline their view on what is needed to respond to the health needs of refugees resettling in the UK (1). They highlight the potentially complex health needs of this group and argue that clinicians in the UK need to be appropriately prepared.

We fully agree with the authors and describe below the work Public Health England (PHE) is engaged in to help deliver these objectives. In addition to PHE's Migrant Health Guide (2), PHE is leading the revision of guidance for the pre-entry health assessment of refugees, consulting disease and migrant health experts, clinical commissioning groups, local authorities (LA), the Home Office (HO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the NHS. This will ensure that health assessments meet the needs of refugees, reflect best practice and that appropriate pre – arrival information can be shared with LAs and local health services. This process is facilitated by a joint information flow working group, where PHE is collaborating with the HO, LAs, NHS England and IOM to ensure that health related information is shared securely with clinicians and relevant UK authorities, and can be used for monitoring and evaluation.

Support for health professionals is also critical. PHE has an established network of Migrant Health Leads – public health professionals based in PHE Centres who work to promote refugee, asylum-seeker and migrant health. Migrant Health Leads link in with other stakeholders locally to promote integration of refugees in their community.

In collaboration with other organisations, PHE makes an important contribution to the health of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants on their way or living in the UK. We believe it is worth highlighting the key role of public health in the complex scenario of resettling refugees and resources on the ground that can facilitate this task.

References

1. Arnold, F., Katona, C., Cohen, J., Jones, L., & McCoy, D. Responding to the needs of refugees. *BMJ* 2015;351:h6731
2. Public Health England. Migrant Health Guide. [Online] 2016. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/topic/health-protection/migrant-health-guide>

Authors

Ines Campos-Matos, Public Health Speciality Registrar, Public Health England (1)

Dominik Zenner, Consultant Epidemiologist, Head of TB Screening, Respiratory Diseases Department, Public Health England (1)

Gemma Smith, Migrant Health Scientist, Travel and Migrant Health Section, Public Health England (1)

Paul Cosford, Director for Health Protection and Medical Director, Public Health England, London, United Kingdom (2)

Hilary Kirkbride, Consultant Epidemiologist and acting Head of Travel and Migrant Health, Public Health England (1)

(1) 61 Colindale Ave, London NW9 5EQ, United Kingdom

(2) Wellington House, 133 to 155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG, United Kingdom

Competing interests

No competing interests