

Global Health is Local Health: Expanding Student Opportunities in Worcester and Abroad

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Immigrants and refugees In Worcester

Worcester is home to 38,000 immigrants and refugees from 85 countries, making up 21 percent of the city's total population. In 2016 alone, 85,000 refugees arrived in the US, with 1,700 settling in Worcester. The majority of these refugees fled their homes in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa, finally arriving in the US after waiting months to years in refugee camps. Many arrive with undiagnosed diseases, parasites, chronic conditions, or emotional trauma, which is often compounded by inadequate medical care, poverty, and limited education, as well as language and cultural barriers.

Global Health Curriculum Development

The Global Health Curriculum Development position allows a medical student to assist with the expansion of opportunities for students both globally and locally. Global Health places a priority on health equity and making quality care accessible to underserved populations. With the ongoing refugee crisis, global health is becoming local health. There is a need for medical students to become culturally and clinically equipped to serve Worcester's diverse population.

Objectives

The main goals were to improve global health experiences for medical students and gain a deeper awareness of the challenges faced by refugees in Worcester. The following objectives were met over the course of the summer.

1. Establish a Refugee Interest Group

- Organize local refugee clinic shadowing experiences for students
- Start a volunteer advocate program, pairing students with refugee families in need of basic help and assistance navigating resources
- Plan events for the fall semester

2. Update the UMASS International Healthcare Opportunity Clearinghouse (IHOC) website

- Re-design webpage to be utilized by health care professionals and students interested in volunteer work internationally

3. Shadow at Family Health Center Worcester

- Shadow fellows at the Family Health Center of Worcester (FHCW), gaining cultural understanding as well as global health clinical experience

4. Volunteer with Worcester Refugee Assistance Project (WRAP)

- Lead the summer reading program for high school students
- Help with weekend youth group activities

Next Steps

The next steps for the Refugee Interest Group will be to get students aware of and excited about refugee health opportunities. Our first two sessions will include an educational presentation by Edward Kennedy Community Health Center and a refugee storytelling event in Boston. FHCW will work with students to help organize shadowing and family advocate partnerships. The IHOC website will be continually updated and monitored through the UMASS library, and through the assistance of future students working on curriculum development. I will continue to work with FHC as well as WRAP.

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References

- <http://www.fhcw.org/en/Home>
- Goodman, M., Borges, D., McCarthy, M., Wright, J., Mattos, T., & Foster, J. (July 2015). *The Foreign-Born Population of Worcester, Massachusetts*. <http://www.sevenhills.org/uploads/ForeignBornStudy.pdf>