

Humanitarian Immigrant Mental Health Rescreening in Primary Care: A Pilot Project  
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Abstract

**Introduction:** Humanitarian immigrants such as refugees and asylees experience a combination of pre and postmigration risk factors that increases their risk for developing common mental health disorders. Despite the observation that humanitarian immigrants experiencing emotional distress present for care frequently with somatic and pain-related complaints, common mental health disorders are generally underdiagnosed by primary care practitioners.

**Purpose and Methods:** This quality improvement project was conducted at a mid-Atlantic Federally Qualified Health Center to provide humanitarian immigrant mental health rescreening to patients 14 years and older 9-15 months after their initial domestic exam utilizing the Refugee Health Screener-13. A retrospective chart review explored this project's impact on positive screening rates, completed behavioral health consults, and case identification among those with frequent somatic visits using McNemar, Chi-Square, and Mann Whitney-U tests.

**Results:** 47 individuals with mean age  $31.8 \pm 14.1$  from 9 countries and an average  $11.4 \pm 1.9$  months since their initial exam participated. There was no statistically significant difference between time periods in positive screening rates nor completed behavioral health consults. However, the positive rescreening group ( $mdn=4$ ) did demonstrate more clinic visits with somatic symptoms than the negative rescreening group ( $mdn=1$ ),  $p=0.010$ .

**Conclusion:** Given the variable occurrence, course, and presentation of mental health disorders in the post-resettlement period, rescreening in primary care is crucial to improve outcomes among this population. Future projects with larger and more representative samples should be conducted to evaluate the impact of timing on effective screening. Primary care providers should consider mental health screening while managing somatic or pain-related symptoms among humanitarian immigrants.

**Keywords:** Humanitarian Immigrants, Refugee, Mental Health Screening, Somatic Symptoms