

S38.4

Oversight of guidelines for refugee care - summary

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In recent times, Europe has experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees from various conflict zones, as people try to escape the violence, destructions and uncertainty in their countries of origin. Refugees and other migrants often face perilous journeys and many times live through the deteriorating conditions of refugee camps, with overcrowding, limited access to food and water and shelter, haphazard sanitation and unfavorable weather conditions. Many have witnessed violence, experienced trauma and been separated from family or suffered the loss of family members in the process. These experiences can have important health consequences, namely rendering these people both physically and psychologically more fragile. Given these past exposures it is expected that refugees may have poor or declining health status. Health services need to adapt to the specific needs of these individuals to prevent further marginalization. With resettlement often come the added difficulties in integrating in society and accessing health care. Here GPs have the potential to play a central role in providing the necessary assistance. Refugee care has over the years become a specialized field and various documents and evidence-based guidelines have been published to support doctors in providing the most adequate care to refugees. Some of the most important resources include The Canadian Collaboration for Immigrant and Refugee Health Guidelines; various UNHCR reports; the International Organization for Migration - Migrations Health Services Medical Manual; and Médecins Sans Frontières - Refugee Health Manual.

Presently, many GPs throughout Europe will inevitably come into contact with this population, as patients in their practice. As such, they will need guidance on how to approach the various relevant health issues, such as immunizations, infectious diseases, chronic and non-communicable diseases, mental health, women's health and sexual violence. Our presentation will aim to highlight the most relevant guidelines and provide guidance to GPs on how to perform health assessments, offer preventative interventions and adequately address the specific health needs of this vulnerable population.