Background

There is a lack of standardized specialty referral pathway for newly arrived refugee patients within the Edmonton, Alberta, Canada Health Zone. In the Edmonton Zone, newly arrived Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) patients undergo initial health screening at the East Edmonton Health Centre (EEHC) within one week of arrival. This includes primary care assessment and referrals to specialists as indicated.

The lack of a standard referral pathway has resulted in variance in clinician and patient communication with potential gaps in patient care. The gaps include unaddressed referral questions, inaccurate or incomplete clinical information, misunderstanding in patient instructions for management plans and follow-up. This is further exacerbated by language barriers between the patient and provider, whereby inconsistent usage of gold-standard Medical Interpretation Services (MIS) has the potential to result in missed or delayed diagnoses, management and follow up plans.

The aim of our project is to create a standardized specialist referral pathway for newly arrived refugee patients in order to improve patient care through accurate clinician assessment and patient communication.

Aim

By Dec 31\textsuperscript{st}, 2020, we aim to implement the use of the standardized refugee referral pathway for General Internal Medicine (GIM).

Method

- **The Model for Improvement** provided the quality improvement framework to support our project.
- **The Donabedian conceptual evaluation framework** guided the development of the study measurement approach to determine intervention effect by mapping out outcome, process and balancing measures.
- This project estimates the number of multiple PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) cycles once the referral pathway is initiated.

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References


Process Assessment

Quality Improvement Steps

- **PDSA 1** Standard Referral Form
  - A language sensitive and patient’s language
  - Focused referral query
  - Pertinent clinical information
  - Refugee status and immigration history

- **PDSA 2** MIS Activation Process
  - Ensure identification of patient referral pathway
  - Physician assessment, follow-up calls
  - EMR utilized as part of alert system flagging GAR patients with language barriers and associated reminder to utilize MIS
  - Visual alerts to generate awareness and serve as reminders to utilize MIS when indicated for MIS in consultation, waiting areas, phone calls and phone appointments

- **PDSA 3** GIM Toolkit for Refugee Healthcare
  - Outline of evidence-based checklist of major considerations for refugee patients

QI Matters

By creating a standardized referral pathway, we hope to streamline communication between patients and providers in order to improve patient safety and develop a patient-centered approach to care for newly arrived refugee patients. Through our project, we aim to create a sustainable framework that may be reproduced and scaled to other regions and departments in times of increasing global migration, it is critical to develop an evidence-based and improvement focused approach to refugee healthcare.

Contact

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Conflict of Interests:

None