



WELCOME

REFUGEE HEALTH PRIMER

Optimizing Primary Care for Refugee
Newcomers Conference



Auditorium, Women's College
Hospital, 76 Grenville St.



Oct. 17, 2025 | 7:30AM -
5:00PM



Family & Community Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL
Healthcare | REVOLUTIONIZED

PROGRAM-AT-GLANCE

8:00 AM

Introduction & Greetings

8:15 AM

The People and the Process: Refugee Arrivals and the Systems That Shape Their Journey

8:45 AM

Award-Winning Young Advocate for Refugee Rights and Co-founder of Elegant Art

9:15 AM

Supporting the growth and development of refugee children: A guide for primary care providers

BREAK

10:15 AM

Mental Health, Focusing on Children & Families

11:00 AM

Parasites in new Canadians from Tropical Areas: What you need to know - Immunization

LUNCH + VISIT TABLING ORGANIZATIONS

1:00 PM

Early Detection and Prevention of Tuberculosis in Foreign-Born Populations

1:45 PM

Updates in Hepatitis B and C Clinical Care and Public Health Initiatives

2:30 PM

Advocating for Refugee Patients – What You Can Do as a Healthcare Provider

BREAK

3:30 PM

Healthcare Coverage for Refugees: Navigating the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)

4:00 PM

Common Themes of Caring for Newcomer and Refugee Women

4:45 PM

Closing Remarks

PROGRAM



8:00 AM

Introduction & Greetings

Jack Woodman (They/Them) is a healthcare strategist, futurist and advocate for health and social justice. A vice president of strategy, quality and risk at Women's College Hospital, they have a passion for improving health at individual, population and system levels to address unmet needs and inequities.



Dr. Danielle Martin is Chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine (DFCM) at the University of Toronto. A practicing family physician, her clinical work has ranged from rural care to maternity services. She is a dedicated educator, mentor, and role model in medical education and leadership. Dr. Martin spent eight years as a senior hospital executive, most recently as Executive Vice President and Lead Medical Executive at Women's College Hospital, where she led the hospital's COVID-19 response. In 2019, she became the youngest physician ever to receive the F.N.G. Starr Award, the Canadian Medical Association's highest honour.

8:15 AM



The People and the Process: Refugee Arrivals and the Systems That Shape Their Journey

Objective: Setting the stage for the conference by providing healthcare providers with a foundational understanding of who is arriving as refugees in Canada, the challenges they face, and how the health system can better support them.

Dr. Meb Rashid has had the privilege of working with newly arrived refugees for nearly twenty years. He is the medical director of the Crossroads Clinic, a medical clinic that serves refugees arriving in Toronto. He also co-founded the Canadian Doctors for Refugee Care, an organization founded to advocate for refugees to access health insurance and was on the steering committee of the CCIRH, a group that developed evidence-based guidelines for the assessment of newly arrived immigrants and refugees. He is a co-founder of the Christie Refugee Health Clinic, a health clinic located in a refugee shelter. He is on staff at Women's College Hospital in Toronto and is an Assistant Professor with the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Toronto.

KEYNOTE



8:45 AM

Award-Winning Young Advocate for Refugee Rights and Co-founder of Elegant Art

Learning Objective: To inspire participants to understand how storytelling, youth-led initiatives, and art can be powerful tools for healing, empowerment, and amplifying refugee voices.

Sedra Alshamaly, a compassionate 16-year-old in Canada, co-founded Elegant Art at age 11 to support displaced children through plantable postcard art. Her work, featured on CBC and Global News, raises funds for Syrian refugee camps. A dedicated writer and speaker, Sedra is crafting a book about her family's journey and advocates for women's and children's rights. With thousands of volunteer hours and awards from leaders, she inspires youth to create change and spread hope.

9:15 AM



Supporting the growth and development of refugee children: A guide for primary care providers

Learning Objectives:

- **Develop an approach to the physical exam for refugee children to identify particular pathologies**
- **Identify tools that can assist primary care physicians with assessing growth and development in refugee children**
- **Build a repository of community services and programs to support growth and development of refugee children**

Dr. Shazeen Suleman (she/her) is a Clinical Associate Professor of General Pediatrics at Stanford University and Co-Director of Community Engagement with the Office of Child Health Equity. She founded Ontario's Compass Clinic, a trauma-informed, multidisciplinary clinic for newcomer children with special healthcare needs. Her research uses community-based participatory methods to address health disparities for migrant children. A national expert in Canada, she chairs multiple pediatric committees and co-founded MusicBox Children's Charity, which has served nearly 20,000 marginalized children through free music education.

10:15 AM



Mental Health, Focusing on Children & Families

Learning Objectives:

- **Explore the social determinants that contribute to poor mental health outcomes.**
- **Differentiate between distress and disease, helping participants recognize when symptoms we are see are "normal" or expected.**
- **Identify situations in which medications are appropriate, and review which medications have been shown to be most effective for specific mental health symptoms.**
- **Examine the different types of counseling and therapeutic interventions available, and evaluate the current evidence on their effectiveness in improving mental health outcomes for children and families.**

Rachel Kronick is a clinician-scientist (FRSQ Chercheur-boursier clinicien, Junior 1) based at the Sherpa and Lady Davis Research Institutes. She is an assistant professor affiliated with the Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry of McGill University. Her clinical work as a child and psychiatrist is based at the Centre for Child Development and Mental Health at the Jewish General Hospital where she provides outpatient care. She completed her residency at McGill University and a clinical and research fellowship at the University of Toronto at the Hincks Dellcrest Institute focusing on homeless and refugeeed populations. She has a Master's of Psychiatry from McGill University. Her research has looked at immigration policy and its consequences for children and families, with a specific focus on immigration detention. Currently her research interest is participatory-action research with asylum seeking communities to develop and implement ecosocial mental health interventions.

11:00 AM



Parasites in new Canadians from Tropical Areas: What you need to know - Immunization

Learning Objectives:

- **Recognize the unique vulnerabilities of refugee populations to parasitic infections and the role of targeted screening in reducing morbidity and transmission.**
- **Discuss opportunities and challenges in applying vaccination strategies within displaced and mobile communities**
- **Explore approaches for integrating parasite screening and vaccination programs into refugee health services, balancing feasibility, equity, and cultural considerations.**

Dr. Isaac Bogoch is an Associate Professor at the University of Toronto in the Department of Medicine, and an Infectious Diseases specialist and General Internist at the Toronto General Hospital with a focus on tropical diseases, HIV, and general infectious diseases. Dr. Bogoch works at the intersection of clinical medicine, epidemiology, public health, and policy. He divides his clinical and research time between Toronto and several countries in Africa and Asia. Dr. Bogoch collaborates with a team that models the spread of emerging infectious diseases, and studies innovative and simple diagnostic solutions to improve the quality of medical care in low-resource settings.

12:00 PM

LUNCH

catered by [Jasmine Kitchen](#)

Local organizations will be tabling in the foyer where lunch will be served.
Take the time to learn about local resources available for refugees.

TABLING ORGANIZATIONS

CCVT (Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture) – Providing essential settlement, Health and Mental Health services for survivors of Torture and crimes against Humanity, CCVT offers healing and empowerment through counseling, education, and legal support. It also provides public education as per mandate.

The Mary Ward Centre – A hub for education and social justice, the Mary Ward Centre supports community initiatives, human rights learning opportunities, and advocacy efforts to protect the rights of refugees, migrants, and victims and survivors of human trafficking.

Newcomer Women's Services Toronto – Equipping newcomer women and their families with the tools, confidence, and community they need to lead and succeed in Canada. Services include employment and language training, leadership development, upskilling, settlement support, and more.

Hope for Refugees – Dedicated to helping newcomers rebuild their lives, Hope for Refugees offers settlement assistance and advocacy.

FCJ Refugee Centre - With an open-door approach, we advocate and assist vulnerable populations, ensuring everyone has access to services and resources.

PTMOF (Pelletier Teenage Mother Foundation) – Supporting young mothers, PTMOF provides guidance, education, and services to help them thrive.

1:00 PM



Early Detection and Prevention of Tuberculosis in Foreign-Born Populations

Learning Objectives:

- Describe key clinical features of tuberculosis disease to facilitate early diagnosis
- Discuss the diagnosis and treatment of latent TB infection
- Discuss new practice recommendations in the 8th edition of Canadian TB Standards

Dr. Kamran Khan is an infectious disease physician at St. Michael's Hospital, scientist at Unity Health Toronto, and Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto. With over 20 years of clinical experience in tuberculosis, he has published extensively on TB care in immigrant and refugee populations. He founded BlueDot, a global epidemic intelligence company, to support rapid public health responses. His work has earned advisory roles with the WHO and White House, a Governor General's Award, and the Temerty Health Nexus Chair in Innovation and Technology.

1:45 PM



Updates in Hepatitis B and C Clinical Care and Public Health Initiatives

Learning Objectives:

- To review public health initiatives and gaps for HBV and HCV
- To review screening, diagnosis, and testing modalities for HBV and HCV
- To review guideline-driven primary care management of HBV and HCV, and when referral is indicated

Mia Biondi, PhD, NP-PHC, received her PhD in Microbiology and Immunology from McGill University, with postdoctoral fellowships at Toronto General Research Institute and the National Microbiology Laboratory. Mia completed her clinical training at Western University to become a Registered Nurse and then Nurse Practitioner. An Assistant Professor at York University, and leads the Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner program. At present her research focuses on increasing hepatitis B, C, and HIV screening and treatment through alternative diagnostic and systems approaches. Clinically, Mia is a practicing Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner in refugee and newcomer health; and oversees focused practices in urban street outreach and rural and remote communities, in HIV prevention, hepatitis B & C.

2:30 PM



Advocating for Refugee Patients – What You Can Do as a Healthcare Provider

Learning Objectives:

- Learn about the service systems that refugee newcomers in Ontario commonly utilize to meet their basic needs, including social assistance, disability benefits, children’s services and housing/shelter
- Learn about the role that health professionals play in these systems, and where opportunities exist to advocate for patients’ access to resources
- Learn about newcomer-serving organizations where refugee patients can be referred for additional support with resource navigation

Ellen Tang (MSW, RSW) is a social worker at the Crossroads Refugee Health Clinic at Women’s College Hospital, and a field instructor in the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto. She has an interest in culturally responsive mental health interventions, and addressing the social determinants of health in promoting the wellbeing of refugee survivors of trauma. She is a member of the Health and Mental Health Working Group of the Toronto South West Local Immigration Partnership.

3:30 PM



Healthcare Coverage for Refugees: Navigating the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)

Learning Objective: To review health care coverage for refugees under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), including guidance on accessing health care benefits

Dr. Vanessa Redditt is a family physician at the Crossroads Refugee Clinic, a specialized primary care clinic for refugees at Women’s College Hospital, and a lecturer at the University of Toronto’s Department of Community and Family Medicine and Dalla Lana School of Public Health. She is passionate about advancing health equity and tackling social determinants of health. Vanessa’s clinical care, research, teaching, and advocacy focus on enhancing the health of marginalized communities, particularly refugee newcomers and migrants.

4:00 PM



Common Themes of Caring for Newcomer and Refugee Women

Learning Objective: In this session, participants will aim to identify and reflect on topics relevant to the care of refugee and newcomer women including contraception, screening and prevention, and fertility care.

Dr. Praseedha Janakiram is a Family Physician at Women's College Hospital's Crossroads Refugee Clinic and an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto's Department of Family and Community Medicine. Her practice centers on refugee care and community-based HIV primary care, with interests in global health education and capacity-building partnerships. She has held key leadership roles, including Program Director of Enhanced Skills in Global Health and Faculty Lead for the Toronto Addis Ababa Academic Collaboration. Recently named Theme Lead for the New and Evolving Academic Leaders Program, Praseedha has earned multiple awards for her contributions to leadership, education, and global health.



Dr. Rachel Spitzer grew up in Montreal and Toronto and obtained her BSc at McGill University in Montreal. She completed medical school at McMaster and residency training in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Toronto. This was followed by fellowship training at The Hospital for Sick Children in Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology. Rachel went on to obtain her MPH at Harvard University in 2007/2008 with a concentration in International Health and an interdisciplinary concentration in Women and Gender Health. Rachel combines clinical practice of general and pediatric and adolescent Obstetrics and Gynecology with the practice and teaching of global women's health and acts as Vice Chair, Global Health and Fellowship Director, Global Women's Health and Equity at the University of Toronto Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology .

4:45 PM

Closing Remarks



Dr. Melanie Henry, a Black (South African and Jamaican) cisgender woman from Newmarket, Ontario, is Vice-Chair of Community and Partnerships in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Toronto. She practices at Oak Valley Health and Health for All, and supports vulnerable populations through Blue Door Shelter and the CPORT program. Dr. Henry earned her MD at McMaster and completed a fellowship in Global Health at U of T. Passionate about equity, she works to improve health equity curricula and address systemic inequities through community engagement, returning to York Region to serve the community that raised her.