

A Qualitative Study of Iraqi Refugees Attitudes About Health Care

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BACKGROUND

- Iraqi refugees increasingly migrating to US
- Iraq's health care system more sophisticated than other countries of refugee origin
- Thus, Iraqis adjust to the US health care system differently from other refugee groups
- Research shows navigating US health system a challenge for refugees
- Limited data on Iraqi refugees health care experiences

OBJECTIVES

- To qualitatively examine the perceptions of newly arrived Iraqi refugees about their health care experience in the US
- To describe the unique challenges Iraqis face in health care utilization

METHODS

Study Design: Prospective cohort study

Study Setting: Refugee Wellness Clinic at an urban Academic Medical Center

Study Population: Newly arrived (<2 years) Iraqi Refugees (> 10 years of age)

Study Method:

- Interviews grouped by household, conducted either face-to-face or via telephone.
- Open-ended & guided questions
- Arabic interpretation provided
- Questions about access, satisfaction with care, cultural sensitivity, interpretation

RESULTS

- Total # of families interviewed: 6 (n= 17)
- Males: 59 %
- Minors: 35 % (Age < 18 years)
- Major themes identified are as below:

Appointment Scheduling

- Appointment: new concept
- Calling clinic is cumbersome
- Long wait & interpretation issue

Language Barrier

- Varying Iraqi accents
- In person interpreter preferred
- Wary of phone interpreters

Gender Roles

- Female interpreters uncomfortable with male physicians & interpreters

Clinic Visit & Prescriptions

- Long wait before being seen
- Different providers each visit
- Need for prescriptions

Health Orientation

- Unclear about well child visits
- Referral system for specialists: new concept

Other

- Doctor's name on insurance card is different from the doctor who sees the patient

RESULTS



"Sometimes the interpreters are Lebanese/Egyptian and it's hard to understand them"

"I don't have any advice, the clinic is doing so much already!"

"We don't know when to go to ER or specialist."



"She was very uncomfortable being asked questions in front of a male"



CONCLUSIONS

- Pediatric experience rated higher than Medicine
- Overall experience is good, but challenges remain
- Future directions:
 - Improving appointment scheduling & prescribing
 - Creating culturally competent health care orientation
 - Being more sensitive to gender preferences

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