



December 16, 2015

Dear Colleagues,

In a few short weeks, an influx of refugees from Syria who are sponsored by the Government of Canada will begin arriving in Saskatchewan and moving to Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon. Privately sponsored refugees will be moving to the communities where the sponsor is located.

Organizations in each of these four larger centres are working out the logistics of the integration of these families into the communities. Health care is one of the critical pieces in the integration.

Many of the children, their families and others arriving in our province will come with considerable health care needs. They have experienced significant trauma because of the violence and war in their home country. In light of this, many will be dealing with mental health issues, including post traumatic stress disorder. It's quite likely that some will have untreated chronic diseases and many children will not be immunized for childhood diseases.

We recognize that refugees from Syria aren't the only ones needing access to health care. Many people and groups of people in Saskatchewan are disadvantaged and marginalized, and efforts continue to be made to ensure access for them as well.

In the meantime, it's essential that those coming to Saskatchewan from refugee camps are given the best possible start once here. If they are welcomed properly, they will adjust better to life in Saskatchewan and will be more likely to become active and productive members of society.

For this reason, we are encouraging family physicians in the four communities to accept as new patients at least one Syrian family.

In addition to providing long-term family medicine services, physicians will be needed initially when the refugees arrive. Community organizations are developing plans for special clinics for initial health care assessments. Although all physicians are encouraged to assist, those with prior experience caring for refugees, those from the Middle East, and those who speak Arabic would be an asset to these initiatives.

Community contacts

If you are able to assist initially and/or accept a family into your practice, please contact the agency in your community.

Moose Jaw: Kliniek on Main, Jana Garinger at 306-694-1440 or jana.garinger@fhr.ca

Prince Albert: YWCA, Kwame Boateng at 306-763-0736 or kwameboatengywca@sasktel.net

Regina: RQHR Family Medicine, Charissa Amyotte at 306-766-0696 or Charissa.Amyotte@rqhealth.ca or family.medicine@rqhealth.ca

Saskatoon: Global Gathering Place, Melanie Baerg at 306-665-0268 or melanie.baerg@globalgatheringplace.com

Resources for physicians

The provincial government will provide basic health care coverage, including physician visits, hospital care, and emergency services. Settlement workers will be helping refugees apply for Saskatchewan Health cards as soon as they arrive. The refugees will also qualify for supplementary services under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP). Physicians providing these health care services will need to register with the IFHP claims administrator at Medavie Blue Cross. To learn more about registering, go to the [Provider Portal of Medavie Blue Cross](#).

The Canadian Medical Association has an exhaustive list of resources on its website under [Syrian refugee settlement](#).

The CMAJ website lists several resources to assist physicians in caring for refugees' health concerns. Go to [Refugee Health](#) for more information. It has also posted an accepted, but unedited, journal article called [Caring for a newly arrived Syrian refugee family](#).

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Health is also compiling a list of resources for physicians. Some of those resources include: Canadian Paediatric Society's [Caring for Kids New to Canada](#) and the College of Family Physicians of Canada's [Refugee Health Care](#).

It is unclear when refugees sponsored by the federal government will begin arriving in Saskatchewan. People working on settlement plans expect some to arrive as early as the end of December with larger groups coming in January and February. Some privately sponsored refugees have already arrived. As many as 800 people are expected in Saskatoon; up to 200 in Prince Albert; a few hundred in Regina; and as many as 200 in Moose Jaw.

We believe Saskatchewan physicians have a valuable role to play as leaders in the health care system. Thank you in advance for doing your part to assist with the settlement of refugees in our province.

Sincerely,



Dr. Mark Brown, President
Saskatchewan Medical Association



Dr. Grant Stoneham, President
Council of the College of Physicians and
Surgeons of Saskatchewan