

OVERVIEW

The Health and Learning Knowledge Centre's Adult Working Group (AWG) conducted consultations to identify themes, gaps and needs for adult immigrants and refugees living in Canada.

Participants included adult immigrants, refugees and service providers from Vancouver, British Columbia; Regina, Saskatchewan; Toronto, Ontario; and Montreal, Quebec.

The report highlights the barriers faced by these individuals and provides some recommendations to better support the health of this group. Some of these are directed to policy makers and others to health-care and service providers.

Many family doctors are not culturally sensitive to women's issues and those of immigrants and refugees. If you're not the model patient, you don't get treated with the full support.

– SERVICE PROVIDER, Toronto, Ontario

THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED

- What health means to immigrants and refugees
- How they keep in good health
- How they learn about health and get the information they need (barriers and what is working well)
- Their experiences with what is working well in the health-care system and what is not, and who should learn what
- What needs to be done

THE PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the consultations were immigrants and refugees and service providers who work with them. The Adult Working Group worked closely with Dr. Marina Niks; MOSAIC, Vancouver Community College, and Regina's Family Literacy Network; Toronto's St. Christopher House; and Baijayanta Mukhopadhyay in Montreal to host the consultations.

THE METHODOLOGY

Consultations were held to gather information. In total, 64 community members and 21 service providers participated.

- One focus group took place in each of the selected locations: Vancouver, BC; Regina, SK; Toronto, ON; and Montreal, QC.
- Each consultation was three to four hours long. At the beginning of the consultation, ethics and informed consent procedures were conducted with participants.
- Participants also completed an anonymous participant profile sheet which provided information on gender, age range, employment status and level of education.

Health has many parts: psychological, physical, mental. It's not easy to bring all of those together at the same time.

– COMMUNITY MEMBER, Montreal, Quebec

KEY FINDINGS:

The main barriers to good health

- Racism and discrimination
- Poverty and substandard housing
- Unemployment and lack of recognition of foreign credentials
- Language and cultural differences
- Challenges in adjusting to new ways of life

The main barriers to accessing information

- Lack of knowledge about where to go or what to ask
- Language and literacy barriers
- Lack of access to written or verbal plain language information

Key barriers to accessing health-care services

- Racism and discrimination
- Cultural insensitivity from health care providers
- Cultural and language barriers
- Insufficient time with health care providers
- Long wait times in hospitals and clinics

WHAT SHOULD COME NEXT?

Supporting research by funding

- The documentation of social factors that affect the health of immigrants and refugees
- Research on interventions that work to improve the health of immigrants and refugees both at the level of policy and practice

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Address social factors related to poverty, employment, food security and housing.
2. Ensure more appropriate and affordable health care that is sensitive to immigrant and refugee concerns
3. Offer anti-racism training for health care providers
4. Recognize the international credentials of doctors and other professionals from outside Canada
5. Provide affordable and accessible language training
6. Develop multi-faceted, clear language strategies for relaying health-related information beyond print materials
7. Offer workshops and discussion groups on health topics to newcomers

THE RESEARCH TEAM

These consultations were conducted by the following members of the Health and Learning Knowledge Centre's Adult Working Group and their partners:

Sue Folinsbee
Wendy Kraglund-Gauthier
Allan Quigley
Hélène Grégoire

The Health and Learning Knowledge Centre is composed of a 17-member consortium led by the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. The centre brings together a wide variety of professional health and learning individuals based in British Columbia, Yukon and across Canada

The AWG focuses on four priority groups: adults with low-literacy levels, immigrants and refugees, adults living with HIV/AIDS, and adults living in rural and remote communities.