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Applying design thinking for community-provider collaboration: Designing a culture- and user-friendly refugee wellness center

Brandon Joa

Thomas Jefferson University, brandon.joa@jefferson.edu

Ellen Solomon

Thomas Jefferson University, ellen.solomon@jefferson.edu

Oluwatoni Okuboyejo

Thomas Jefferson University, oluwatoni.okuboyejo@jefferson.edu

Shandon Coffman

Thomas Jefferson University, shandon.coffman@jefferson.edu

Bon Ku, MD, MPP

Thomas Jefferson University, bon.ku@jefferson.edu

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Title: Applying design thinking for community-provider collaboration: Designing a culture- and user-friendly refugee wellness center

Author(s): Ellen Solomon BA, Oluwatoni Okuboyejo BA**, Shandon Coffman BA**, Brandon Joa BA**, Bon Ku, MD, MPP*

Purpose: This case study demonstrates the application of design thinking to the process of building a culturally sensitive health center for refugees and immigrants.

Background: Refugee communities present a growing underserved population. Designing South Philadelphia's first permanent healthcare facility dedicated to immigrant and refugee health presents a unique opportunity to integrate cultural sensitivity with principles of community health. Design thinking is a promising yet underutilized strategy for addressing health and social justice concerns in an efficient way that improves both provider and patient satisfaction. A project was conducted to utilize design thinking to make suggestions to the design of Hansjörg Wyss Wellness Center to promote a culturally diverse and welcoming environment to ultimately improve healthcare outcomes for the immigrant population of South Philadelphia.

Methods: Seven focus groups provided data on preferences and feedback from patient populations, community partners, architects, and healthcare providers. A healthcare "design sprint" brought together stakeholders (physicians, architects, designers, community representatives) to implement design thinking to ideate and refine solution prototypes.

Results: Focus groups reported common barriers to accessing healthcare such as: lack of adequate language interpretation (for making appointments, navigating, and understanding medical terminology), long wait times, and transportation. Incorporation of health education resources, space for community events, mental health care, and space/activities for children were

priorities to include in the wellness center design. Design sessions produced prototypes acceptable to community and staff and suitable for use by architects to inform values-driven development of wellness center.

Conclusions: Design thinking is an effective for integrating preferences from community members and providers. Design thinking can optimize space utilization when building a healthcare facility. Further study would involve collecting data on patient and provider satisfaction after construction of the facility.