Helping Refugees Navigate the Health Care Maze

Introduction
Jenna’s main focus during her Bridging the Gaps assignment at NSC was an outcomes assessment for use in grant applications. Her side projects included client service and education development.

Goals
- Complete an assessment of medical and social service outcomes for NSC refugee clients over the past two years
- Connect disabled refugees with opportunities
- Create a handout on rheumatic heart disease

Activities
- Used NSC’s Sage ACT! database and Microsoft Excel to assess data on refugee screenings (see graphs below) and other measures
- Contacted Philadelphia office for Vocational Rehabilitation, met with Community Legal Services, and helped with SSI applications
- Developed an education sheet on RHD using UC Davis health literacy guidelines

Outcomes
- Completed outcomes assessment as requested and helped write NSC’s submission to the Premier Cares Award
- Helped form a liaison position between VR and NSC to help disabled refugees access employment services
- Completed RHD education sheet

Reflections
Jenna: “Working at NSC this summer has afforded me the unique opportunity to observe firsthand the challenges that refugee patients face in navigating the United States health care system. It has been a wonderful springboard to my further involvement with the Philadelphia refugee population through work with the Refugee Health Partners group at Jefferson.”

Nationalities Service Center
NSC is a non-profit organization that provides social, educational and legal services to immigrants and refugees in the Greater Philadelphia area. Since its founding in 1921, NSC’s mission has been to help immigrants and refugees participate fully in American society. Each year, NSC helps approximately 4,000 individuals from over 90 countries by meeting five main objectives:

1) Protecting the legal rights of all immigrants
2) Empowering immigrants and refugees, including the most vulnerable, on the path toward social adjustment
3) Strengthening immigrant communities
4) Advocating for fair and humane policies toward immigrants and refugees
5) Promoting the value of diversity in the Philadelphia region

http://www.nscphila.org/

Philadelphia Refugee Health Collaborative
In recent years, NSC has led efforts to create a network of primary care clinics in order to facilitate timely medical screenings for refugees arriving to all three Philadelphia resettlement agencies. Interns such as Jenna and Andy serve to escort refugee patients to screening appointments at these clinics. They are also instrumental in scheduling and documenting additional medical needs upon referral, as well as in escorting patients to specialist care, dental care, and follow-up testing.

Reflections
Andy: “My experience at the NSC has shown me some of the tremendous challenges refugees face both for receiving medical care and adjusting to life in a new country. Despite these obstacles, it is wonderful to see these families thrive and pursue the American dream. I have found a newfound appreciation for refugees that will stay with me throughout my medical career.”

Health Care Resource Outreach
Introduction
Andy’s main focus at NSC was researching and giving a presentation on healthcare options for refugees after their government-sponsored insurance ends. His side projects included client service and health orientations.

Goals
- Research free and low-cost medical care options
- Present this information in a culturally sensitive manner to the Iraqi and Bhutanese communities

Activities
- Used NSC’s background materials to research issues relevant to the Bhutanese and Iraqi communities and free or low-cost medical care sites available to the refugee communities
- Created a presentation, handouts, and a map of resource locations

Outcomes
- Fliers have been distributed for a presentation to the Iraqi community on 8/4/12. Another for the Bhutanese community was cancelled at the last minute due to unforeseen circumstances.