

Unpacking Hospitalization Patterns among Resettled Refugees: A Data Linkage Study

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Recently resettled refugees in Global North countries have health needs and health usage patterns that differ from longer term residents of these countries. Studies of refugee health are often ad-hoc and based on small surveys. Since refugee groups often settle in cohorts, findings for one cohort may not be always relevant for other cohorts. Data linkage provides one approach to managing this problem. Using data from the Refugee Health Nurse Program in Sydney, Australia linked to hospitalisation data, we investigated patterns of hospitalisation among around 10,000 resettled child and adult refugees. We interpret our findings using an extension of Anderson's framework of health services utilisation. Our results show higher odds of emergency visits, and multiday stays among refugee children and adults compared to those born in Australia. Refugee children had higher odds of being hospitalised from digestive diseases and injury related admissions, while adults were most likely to be hospitalised with cardiovascular diseases and genitourinary diseases. Women had longer stays than men, and as may be expected, hospitalisations increased with age. Refugees from Asia and Africa had higher rates of hospitalisation than refugees from the Middle East. There were inconsistent trends of length of stay. The results suggest an interplay of contextual factors including the refugee journey and predisposing factors such as culture in addition to other factors.

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