

Building a Healthcare Navigation Program with the Bhutanese Refugees of Philadelphia

Statement of Problem

There are approximately 2,000 Bhutanese refugees in Philadelphia, many of whom experience disparities in health that are outside of their control. After arriving in the United States, [refugees](#) must quickly learn to [navigate](#) a host of complex U.S. systems, such as health care, with minimal support.

Description

Building a Healthcare Navigation Program with the Bhutanese Refugees of Philadelphia



There are approximately **2,000 Bhutanese refugees in Philadelphia**. After arriving in the United States, refugees must quickly learn to navigate a host of complex US systems, such as healthcare, with minimal support. The **Health Focal Point** program is community-based and helps clients solve pressing problems **accessing health care**, using a combined approach of **direct assistance** and **education** to help clients gain **knowledge, skills, and confidence**.

The Health Focal Points program is a partnership between the Bhutanese American Organization-Philadelphia and PolicyLab. Using lessons learned from existing [social service organizations](#) serving immigrant and [refugee communities](#), we worked with experts from the [Penn Center for Community Health Workers](#) and the [Center for Public Health Initiatives](#) to adapt a community health worker program aimed at teaching Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees how to navigate the U.S. health care system.

This community-based program helps clients solve pressing problems accessing health care, such as language and cultural barriers. It uses a combined approach of direct assistance and education to help clients gain knowledge, skills and confidence. The ultimate goals are self-reliance of the clients, empowerment of the Health Focal Point, and dissemination of an efficient and effective model that new immigrant communities can use to help their members learn to have successful interactions with the U.S. health system.

Next Steps

With funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Bhutanese American Organization-Philadelphia will continue to expand and improve the Health Focal Points program. We plan to strengthen community outreach efforts as well as include more outreach to engage parents of children under the age of 18. Lastly, we aim to conduct a rigorous outcomes evaluation to document program effectiveness.

Additional Information:

Bhutanese Refugee Community:

[Bhutan Refugees Renew Farming in US](#), YouTube

["Bhutan is No Shangri-La"](#), *The New York Times*

[Bhutan News Service](#)

[NRB: The Voice of Non Resident Bhutanese](#)

Community Health Worker Programs:

[Penn Center for Community Health Workers](#)

[Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services](#)

[Colorado Patient Navigator Training Collaborative](#)

["Understanding Why Patients of Low Socioeconomic Status Prefer Hospitals Over Ambulatory Care"](#), *Health Affairs*

["Role Development of Community Health Workers: An Examination of Selection and Training Processes in the Intervention Literature"](#), *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*

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PolicyLab Leads

Katherine Yun

MD, MHS

Faculty Member

Katherine Yun's primary interest is refugee and immigrant health, specifically the well-being of children in immigrant families in the United States. Her work has focused on the prevalence of chronic, non-communicable conditions and insurance coverage among refugees in the US, differences in primary and dental care utilization by children in different types of immigrant families, and evaluation of health care navigation and related programs for refugee communities. Current projects seek to address language barriers in behavioral health care and blunt the impact of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) on refugees and migrants.

Dr. Yun received her medical degree from Harvard Medical School in 2006 and completed her residency in pediatrics at Yale University in 2009. Between 2009-2011, she was a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholar and earned her Masters in Health Sciences Research from the Yale University School of Medicine. While at Yale, she was the supervising physician in the Yale-New Haven Hospital Pediatric Refugee Clinic, a co-recipient of Connecticut's Myra M. Oliver Award for going "above the call of duty" to support refugees and immigrants. CHOP's Refugee Health Program, led by Dr. Mary Fabio, is a recipient of the Gold Door Award from [HIAS-PA](#), "Honoring those who lead the way in support of immigrants and refugees."

Dr. Yun has also worked in Europe, where she supported research on the health impact of human trafficking, and Central Asia, where she taught middle school. From 2014-2018, Dr. Yun served on the Executive Committee of the Section on International Child Health at the American Academy of Pediatrics. She currently serves on the [Research, Evaluation, and Ethics Committee](#) for the Society of Refugee Healthcare Providers. Dr. Yun and her husband live in Philadelphia, PA.



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Team

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Project Contact

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Related Tools & Publications

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[High Prevalence of Chronic Non-Communicable Conditions Among Adult Refugees](#)

[Article](#)

2012

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[Help-Seeking Behavior and Health Care Navigation by Bhutanese Refugees](#)

[Article](#)

Dec 2015

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[Interest in Collaborative, Practice-Based Research Networks in Pediatric Refugee Health Care](#)

[Article](#)

Oct 2016

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[Refugee Health Care in the United States](#)

[Webinars](#)

Apr 2018

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[Factors Associated with Refugee Acute Healthcare Utilization in Southern Connecticut](#)

[Article](#)

Apr 2018

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[The Case for Research-informed Immigrant Health Policies Within Health Care Systems](#)

[Article](#)

Apr 2020

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[COVID-19 and Immigrant Essential Workers: Bhutanese and Burmese Refugees in the United States](#)

[Article](#)

Nov 2020