

# Helping Refugees with PTSD Receive the Care They Need

## Statement of Problem

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects [nearly 1 in 10 resettled refugee adults in high- and middle-income nations](#). Not effectively treating an adult's PTSD can have profound negative impacts on their child's behavior and development, which can lead to a number of health-related issues in the future. We know that kids do better when their parents do better, so it's essential to take the necessary steps to improve the health of caregivers.

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) has a comprehensive systematic review that outlines the evidence base for PTSD treatment titled "[Psychological and Pharmacological Treatments for Adults with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder](#)." However, the review does not describe the evidence specifically for refugees and does not include direction to clinicians on how to present treatment options to adults with emerging English proficiency.

## Description

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This project will focus on increasing knowledge of Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute treatment evidence among clinicians who care for refugees, as well as professional interpreters and refugee community leaders, and provide guidance on how to discuss treatment options with patients.

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In partnership with [Pennsylvania's Refugee Resettlement Program](#), [Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Refugee Health Program](#) and [Multi-Cultural Health Evaluation Delivery System, Inc.](#), we focused on increasing knowledge of PCORI's treatment evidence among clinicians who care for refugees, as well as professional interpreters and refugee community leaders, and providing guidance on how to discuss treatment options with patients. As a first step, we developed [a brief, provider-oriented summary](#) of PCORI evidence on PTSD treatment for adult refugees. Next, we created a multi-lingual glossary for accurately and sensitively discussing PTSD treatment recommendations with refugees from a variety of backgrounds, which contains a list of PTSD-related terms and phrases. You can find these glossaries here:

- [Arabic](#)
- [Karen](#)
- [Swahili](#)
- [Nepali](#)

With support from PolicyLab's communications team and Pennsylvania's Refugee Health Program, we disseminated these materials to clinicians, professional interpreters and refugee leaders through multiple platforms like social media, listservs, websites, webinars and presentations in order to increase awareness of the research. We then surveyed clinicians and other stakeholders to measure changes in their awareness of PTSD treatment recommendations.

In September 2020, our team hosted "[Talking About PTSD: Improving Communication and Care for Refugee Patients](#)," a webinar during which we discussed the challenges of communicating mental health treatment options across language and cultural differences and how these new resources can help foster better communication between clinicians, professional medical interpreters and refugee patients. You can find a recording of this webinar [here](#).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our team also shared resources and strategies for community leaders who are assisting refugee community members experiencing increased stress or trauma during the pandemic through a [series of webinars](#). These webinars were recorded in [Arabic](#), [Burmese](#), [English \(ASL\)](#), [Nepali](#) and [Swahili](#). Through these recorded virtual events, we hope to increase provider and community awareness of resources available to help immigrant families cope with stress.

## Next Steps

Our hope is that by strengthening providers' knowledge of PTSD treatment for refugees, all refugees will have [the opportunity to live a healthy life](#) not only for themselves, but also for their children.

*PCORI is an independent, non-profit organization authorized by Congress in 2010 to fund comparative effectiveness research that will provide patients, their caregivers, and clinicians with the evidence needed to make better-informed health and healthcare decisions. PCORI is committed to seeking input from a broad range of stakeholders to guide its work.*

*This project page was last updated in December 2021.*

## Suggested Citation

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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

### Kathryn Saulinas

#### Multimedia Manager

Kathryn Saulinas (she/her) is the multimedia manager at PolicyLab working to leverage innovative communication tools to elevate the center's research and profile among key stakeholders. She provides communications support across the center and collaborates with investigators within the Health Equity and Adolescent Health & Well-being Portfolios to execute strategic and creative dissemination of relevant research to policymakers, communities and providers. Ms. Saulinas is responsible for setting and executing PolicyLab's social media and video strategies. She also provides graphic design and data visualization support to the center.

Prior to joining PolicyLab, Ms. Saulinas most recently served as a marketing and communications specialist for Shriners Children's. Ms. Saulinas received a BA from Bloomsburg University.



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## Funders of Project

Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute

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## Related Tools & Publications

- [Providing Emotional Support for Immigrant Communities During COVID-19 in 200 Words](#)  
[Blog Post](#)  
Jun 10, 2021
- [Interest in Collaborative, Practice-Based Research Networks in Pediatric Refugee Health Care](#)  
[Article](#)  
Oct 2016
- [Refugee Health Care in the United States](#)  
[Webinars](#)  
Apr 2018
- [Overcoming Language Barriers in Mental and Behavioral Health Care for Children and Adolescents—Policies and Priorities](#)  
[Article](#)  
Apr 2019
- [Translating Discharge Instructions for Limited English-proficient Families: Strategies and Barriers](#)  
[Article](#)  
Oct 2019
- [Caring for Children in Immigrant Families: Are U.S. Pediatricians Prepared?](#)  
[Article](#)  
Nov 2019
- [Effective Treatment for Refugee Adults with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\): A Summary of Practice Recommendations for Clinicians](#)  
[Tools and Memos](#)  
Apr 2020
- [Talking About PTSD: Improving Communication and Care for Refugee Patients](#)  
[Webinars](#)  
Sep 2020

- [Culturally-appropriate Orientation Increases the Effectiveness of Mental Health First Aid Training for Bhutanese Refugees: Results from a Multi-state Program Evaluation](#)

[Article](#)

Oct 2020

Related Projects

[Building a Healthcare Navigation Program with the Bhutanese Refugees of Philadelphia](#)  
[Health Equity](#)