

## Shaping Refugee Health Care: Uncovering Student Research

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What happens when graduate research meets community-driven health care? Two exceptional students are advancing equity in refugee health through projects rooted in strong community partnerships. Working with the New Canadians Health Centre (NCHC), they are amplifying refugee voices and uncovering barriers to maternal and primary health services, offering insights that can shape service delivery and policy across Canada.

### Student Spotlight 1: Maternal Health Service Access by Refugee Women in Canada

I am currently in the final stretch of my thesis program, and my research project focuses on exploring the lived-experiences of refugee women accessing maternal health services in Canada. Refugee women account for 49% of the overall refugee population. When they migrate to Canada, they face a series of barriers in accessing maternal health services. These barriers consist of language, difficulty navigating the healthcare system, transportation challenges, and experiences of racism and discrimination.

Unfortunately, these challenges have led many refugee women to be at a higher risk of negative maternal health outcomes such as increased risk of stillbirths, higher perinatal mortality, gestational diabetes, and more.



**Mehraban (Mary)  
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*MSc, University of Alberta*

In close partnership with the NCHC, a community health centre that serves government-assisted refugees, the objective of my thesis was to closely engage refugee women patients to understand their unique experiences in accessing maternal health services at the centre.

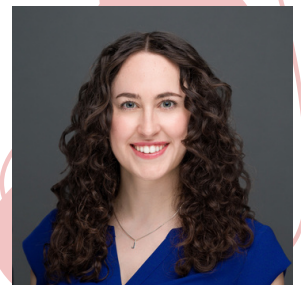
This led me to have rich conversations with refugee women participants via semi-structured interviews in their first language, and I was able to leverage my multilingual abilities to truly connect with the participants in understanding their experiences. The interview outcomes have been incredibly important in not only informing the programs and practices at the NCHC, but they have also been pivotal in continuing the discourse surrounding refugee health to help enhance policies and practices across Canada.



I have been incredibly fortunate in being able to share my research at a handful of national and international conferences. I have plans for publishing my scoping review and qualitative study findings in open-access academic journals in the near future.

## Student Spotlight 2: Evaluating a Principles-Based Refugee Community Health Centre

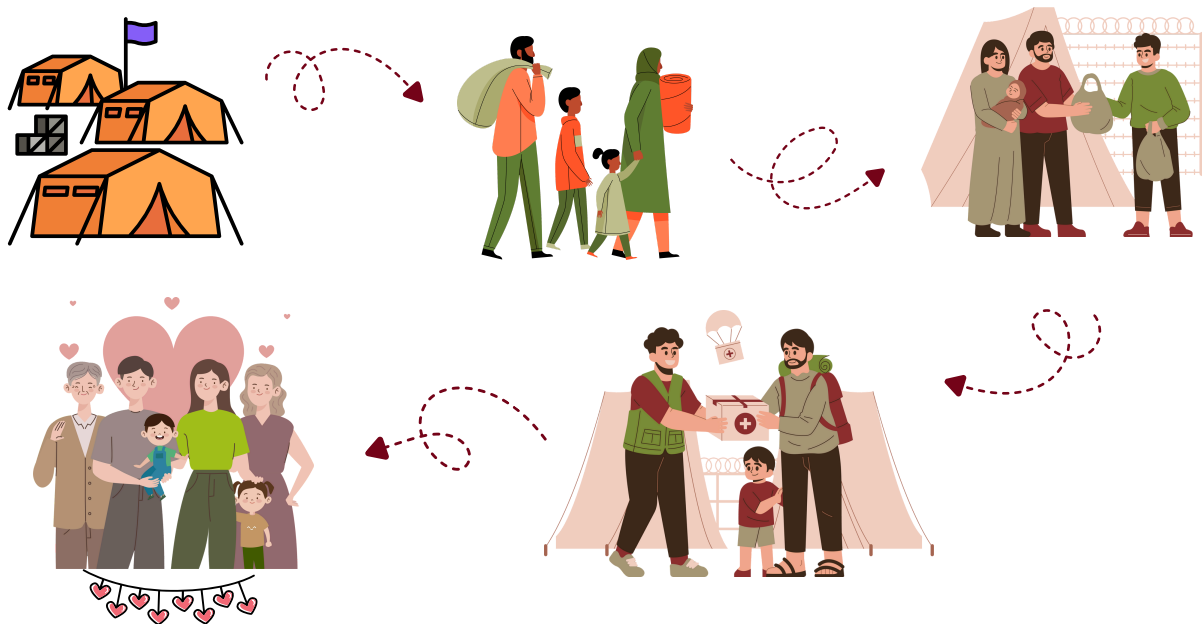
As a PhD candidate, I am collaborating with the NCHC, Edmonton's refugee healthcare centre. Working with a team of healthcare leaders at the NCHC and research colleagues in the ECN, we are collaboratively investigating how the centre's principles-based model supports improved healthcare access and outcomes for refugees, with the aim of informing broader healthcare practices across Canada.



Jessica Haight  
*PhD, University of Alberta*

My dissertation specifically examines how the NCHC model is applied in practice and how it shapes refugees' experiences of care and health outcomes. To explore this, I have conducted interviews with refugee clients and NCHC team members. These interviews with refugees were conducted in multiple languages, with the support of language interpreters. Combining client and staff perspectives has provided key insights into refugees' experiences of care and the ways in which the model is enacted in day-to-day operations.

This research is timely given the recent significant arrivals of refugees across Canada. The findings will be used to strengthen practice and programs at the NCHC and will also contribute to the broader spread and scale-up of innovative, community-based models of care. In doing so, this work has the potential to shape healthcare provision for refugees and other marginalized populations nationwide.



As I wrap up the qualitative portion of my research (i.e., the interviews with refugee clients and NCHC team members), I am now preparing to begin the next phase, which is analyzing clients' electronic medical record (EMR) data at the NCHC. This analysis of EMR data will provide key insights on clients' sociodemographics, health concerns, and healthcare service utilization, which will complement the qualitative insights to provide a more complete understanding of refugees' use and outcomes of care within the NCHC's principles-based model.

This work will build on the collaborative partnership we have established with the NCHC, guided by our shared mission to deepen understanding of refugee health needs and enhance the care they receive.