### BACKGROUND

- The Refugee Women’s Health Clinic (RWHC) provides Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB/GYN) services for refugees, asylum seekers, and new immigrants in the Greater Boston area.
- The RWHC is one of 3 refugee health clinics at BMC.
- Refugees are a vulnerable population, and in order to care for their physical and mental health, providers must be proactive in eliminating barriers to care.
- The RWHC experienced a break in services 1 year ago and the new clinic team is working on rebuilding the RWHC.
- This project aims to explore causes for underutilization of the RWHC and implement strategies to increase utilization, thereby ensuring that BMC is providing their refugee patients with accessible, comprehensive care.

### AIM

To increase the number of visits to the Refugee Women’s Health Clinic by 20% by February 2018.

Baseline appointment per clinic day: 7
Baseline visit 6 per clinic day: 4

### METHODS

- Visit volume can be increased by both increasing referrals and decreasing no shows.
- In order to increase referrals, we identified the current and potential referral sources, and interviewed stakeholders affiliated with those entities, to identify current challenges and possible interventions.
- In order to decrease no shows, we interviewed patients, former patients, and providers to identify barriers and potential interventions.
- We implemented interventions over the course of 6 months and tracked volume data to monitor the impacts of the interventions.

### SOLUTIONS

#### Increasing Referrals

- Don’t know about Women’s Refugee Health Clinic
- Value added of refugee specific clinic?
- Not screening for refugee status during intake
- Referral process not streamlined

#### Decreasing No Shows

- Transportation
- Lawyer
- Food
- Non-English speaking patients report difficulty navigating the hospital

### RESULTS

#### Lessons learned:
- Within BMC, the greatest barrier to increasing utilization at the Refugee Women’s Health Clinic is a lack of screening for refugee status at points of intake and a lack of awareness of the existence and value of a refugee specific clinic.
- Interventions to increase screening are simple to implement, but it is too soon to tell if increasing those screenings led to a significant increase in identifying refugees.
- Interventions to increase awareness of the existence and value of the RWHC have just begun, thus it is too early to assess their effectiveness.
- Refugees face many of the same barriers as other under-served populations, such as a lack of housing, employment and food, but they also face a unique set of challenges.
- Asylum seekers are ineligible for employment until they have submitted their paperwork and waited 150 days, so that barrier cannot be eliminated as that process proceeds.
- They also face the challenge of not understanding the transportation system, needing a lawyer for their asylum cases, and fearing for their safety in crowded areas and for some, in the presence of police officers or hospital officials.
- Of these challenges, the barrier of transportation is both the most immediate barrier to refugee patients making it to their appointments, and the easiest to combat.

#### Effectiveness of Interventions:

- Caring for the health of refugee and asylum seeking patients requires an attentiveness to the multifaceted determinants affecting their health such as past trauma history, immigration status, and barriers to their care. Ensuring that refugee patients that come to BMC are set up with medical care at an appropriate refugee health clinic ensures that we are providing them with the most comprehensive and effective care.

#### Usefulness of the work:

- Increased use of Interventions with effectiveness of interventions.
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### NEXT STEPS

#### Upcoming interventions:
- Community Health Center talks
- Grand Rounds in OB/GYN and Family Medicine
- Community referral process
- Educational interventions to improve rate of compliance to referral
- Emergency Room refugee screening
- Exploring financial feasibility of Circulation pilot
- CHC EPIC referral stream

#### Sustainability:

- The interventions to increase referrals are aimed at the education of providers who are sources of those referrals. This education must be reinforced regularly in order for this intervention to be sustainable.

#### Suggested next steps:

- There is a great need for larger scale, more sustainable solutions to the barriers identified in this study - particularly for the need to connect patients with legal resources, because obtaining refugee status and the ability to get a job is a critical step in addressing many of the barriers our patients face.

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