

Exploring access to medicines and pharmacy services for resettled refugees

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METHODS

Adhering to guidelines for systematic reviews by PRISMA, this review synthesised findings of research that explored the barriers and/or facilitators of access to medication and pharmacy services for resettled refugees. Databases were searched during March 2014 and included Scopus, ProQuest Sociological Abstracts, PubMed, Embase and APAIS Health. The Australian and International grey literature was also explored.

RESULTS

Out of 651 potentially relevant articles, 9 studies met quality and inclusion criteria. The research reported in 7 of the 9 studies was conducted in the United States, 1 was conducted in Australia and the other in the United Kingdom. The majority of studies focused on Southeast Asian refugees. Themes identified across the studies included language and the use of interpreters; navigating the Western healthcare system; culture and illness beliefs; medication non-adherence; use of traditional medicine; and family, peer and community support.

DISCUSSION

The difficulties that resettled refugees experience in accessing primary healthcare services have been widely documented. In most developed countries, pharmacists are often the first healthcare professional contacted by consumers; however, the ability of refugees to access community pharmacy and medication may be limited. This review indicates a significant paucity of published research exploring barriers to medication and pharmacy services among this vulnerable population. Findings from the international literature suggest that refugees experience barriers to medication access, including language and cultural barriers, and experience difficulties navigating the pharmacy healthcare system. This review highlights the need for appropriate interpreting and translation services, as well as pharmacists demonstrating effective cross-cultural communication skills.