

Making a difference to systems for primary health care delivery to Australian refugees and asylum seekers

About the overall research program: Australia is one of many developed countries that resettles people fleeing from war, persecution or natural disasters. Nearly all newly arrived refugees face substantial health challenges – not only from pre-migration trauma, but also from the demands of settling in a new and unfamiliar country.

These challenges are compounded by the fact that, across the nation, organisations tasked with delivering specialised health services to refugees have reached capacity. Waiting times are long, transition of care from specialised services to mainstream general practice is inconsistent, and mainstream general practice is under-equipped to provide consistently high quality care to this vulnerable population.

These systemic weaknesses contribute to poor health outcomes for refugees through missed opportunities for early intervention and continuity of care, especially for the prevention and management of long-term physical and psychological conditions. Refugees who fall through the gaps are increasingly turning to hospital emergency departments for health needs. These needs could be managed more effectively and at lower cost to the health system through community based primary care services such as mainstream general practice.

The OPTIMISE Partnership Project aligns 11 national, state and local organisations responsible for delivering community based care to refugees, with an international team of academics. We will work closely with health and social sector partners to generate a model of integrated refugee primary health care suitable for uptake throughout Australia.

The opportunity: The OPTIMISE Partnership Project is offering up to 2 x 3-4 month internships.

We are seeking passionate students with an interest in promoting equitable access to high quality, coordinated and appropriate health care for people of refugee backgrounds. We have no preference for graduate or undergraduate students and welcome students from diverse programs of study.

This internship will allow students to explore their own topic of interest with guidance from an international research team. Example intern projects include:

1. Learning about approaches for involving vulnerable community members in primary health care system re-design to better suit their needs.
2. Implementing a tailored local intervention through a community-researcher partnership
3. Evaluating the impact of these interventions on accessibility of, transition between and quality of care within services providing primary care for Australian refugees and asylum seekers.
4. Disseminating findings to national and international audiences from academic, policy and community backgrounds to promote sustainable scale-up in different contexts.

Start date: Internships are available from May 2019. Internships should conclude by end of August 2019. Specific start and end dates will be negotiated with the successful candidate.

Duration: 3-4 months.