

Mater Refugee Health Consultants ('G11') supporting communities from Refugee backgrounds



Mater Refugee Health is dedicated to improving refugee health outcomes for those who came to Australia as refugees and now live in Brisbane and Logan.

Why the need for consultants?

In 2012, Mater Refugee Health recognised the need for engagement with refugee communities to address the growing issues of health literacy, access to medical care and treatment of chronic disease across Brisbane.

The initiative started with an initial group of 4 women, and with the application of community engagement principles has grown to a group of 11. All members are active community members and are seen as 'natural' health leaders within their communities, often sought out to provide advice in regard to health. The group continues to change and evolve reflecting the countries of origin settling in Brisbane. Additional funding and projects also enable the group to mentor consultants from other cultural backgrounds.

Who are the G11?

The current group are drawn from many of the larger refugee background communities in Brisbane and include members from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Burundi, Rwanda, Eritrea, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Myanmar.

Each member is employed on a retainer basis as a consultant, and all have other professional commitments. All have come to Australia from refugee backgrounds and have professional health background experience - for example experience in the areas of social work, nursing, midwifery, interpreting, juvenile justice, dietetics and mental health.

What do the G11 do?

The group represents a model of consumer engagement where the consultants act as a bridge between the refugee background community and the health system. Their focus is twofold:

- To provide advice to clinicians, service providers and policymakers to connect the refugee background communities with the Queensland health care system. The group has provided feedback to Queensland Health about a range of health issues including breast health, immunisations, chronic disease management and patient engagement strategies system including the evaluation of the

Refugee Health and Wellbeing: A policy and action plan for Queensland 2017-2020.

- To support their respective communities to increase health literacy and access to services through facilitation of health information workshops, sharing translated health information via various channels.

The group also work closely with partner organisations and have mentored similar groups across the state such as Group Toowoomba (GT) comprising of 4 Yazidi consultants and Cairns 6 (C6) comprising of Arakanese, Congolese, Cairns African Association, Bhutanese, Myanmar, Ukrainian.

More Information

- About the community engagement model, see the article published in the Australian Journal of Primary Health Care: '*Community engagement with refugee-background communities around health: the experience of the Group of 11*' (2019) <https://www.publish.csiro.au/PY/PY18139>
- About the G11 email ally.wakefield@mater.org.au
- About refugee health in Queensland, subscribe to the Refugee Health Network Qld E news here: <http://www.refugeehealthnetworkqld.org.au/e-newsletters/>