

July 16-17, 2018
London, UK

Hikmet J. Jamil, J Prev Med 2018, Volume 3
DOI: 10.21767/2572-5483-C1-001

A THREE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP ON CHRONIC DISEASE, AND THE ROAD TO PREVENTION: REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES

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Background: Little is known about the prevalence and trajectory of chronic diseases (CD), among recent immigrants and refugees to the United States (US). To inform CD prevention efforts, we examined baseline prevalence of CD and its trajectory over the first two years in the US among refugees and immigrants from the Middle East.

Methods: A sample of 314 recent Middle East immigrants and 298 newly arrived Iraqi refugees was recruited in southeast Michigan; most (254 immigrants and 283 refugees), were reassessed two years later. Participants responded to an interview in Arabic using a validated structured survey which asked about socioeconomics and the presence of 11 physician-diagnosed CD (e.g. hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, asthma, obesity, cancer), and self-rated health (SRH). Analyses compared immigrants and refugees over time. The Wayne State University Institutional Review Board approved the study.

Results: The two groups differed on most variables studied. Refugees had lower rate of employment, education, alcohol use, and being single. Refugees had higher rates of most CD than immigrants at both time points, and most CD increased over 2 years in both sample (except for (skin/asthma/depression). Immigrants increased from 0.52 (SD=1.0) to 0.92 (SD=1.66) CD, whereas refugees increased from 1.03 (SD=1.41) to 1.60

(SD=1.97). Regression analyses indicated that the increase in CD over time was, predicted by baseline CD as well as old age, unemployment, poor self-rated health and poor self-rated mental health.

Conclusion: Both refugees and immigrants increased in CD two years after arrival. Prevention efforts should target risk factors to prevent the rise in CD in these populations.

Biography

Hikmet J Jamil joined Baghdad University in 1979 and in 1997 emigrated to USA. In 1998 he joined Wayne State University and in 2015 joined Michigan State University. He is author of 20 books. In 2013, he wrote chapter in a Book title *"Biopsychosocial Perspective on Arab American: Cultural Development and Health"*. He has 194 publications and has given 1190 presentations at scientific meetings. He participates in research funded by e.g., NIMH, CURES, Pfizer. He is one of the founders of AlNahrain International Society of Iraqi Scientists in 2017. In 2003 his biography was listed in the 25th & 26th Dictionary of International Biography, Cambridge, as well as in the American Biographical Institute, USA. In 2012, the Iraqi Society of Occupational Health and Safety named the conference Room of the Society by him. He had received several Awards from different academic institutions, non-profit organizations, WHO and Governmental agents.

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