

# Physical activity participation among adult refugees living in the United States

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## Background

- In the US there is a growing population of refugees.
- Refugees experience life-altering events and must adjust to a new lifestyle and culture, predisposing them to developing chronic disease.
- There is a higher incidence of conditions such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, chronic pain, as well as other psychological conditions.
- PA is an effective strategy for promoting psychological well-being, physical health, and reducing the risk for chronic diseases.
- Engaging in PA may help refugees cope with the stress and trauma they've experienced while addressing modifiable risk factors
- There are many barriers that make engaging in PA especially difficult for refugees.

### Purpose

- Identify common barriers to PA across the literature
- Identify characteristics of successful community-based interventions
- Create a framework that can help physical therapists and other healthcare providers facilitate PA participation among refugees
- Find current gaps in the literature and suggest future research directions

#### Methods

**Timeline:** Jul 2018 - Feb 2019

<u>Databases:</u> Academic Search Premier, CINAHL, MEDline, Pubmed, Google Scholar

<u>Search terms:</u> Refugee, asylee, displaced people, evacuee, barriers, obstacles, restrictions, physical activity, exercise, physical therapy, recreation, quality of life, well-being, and general health

**Articles identified:** 37

**Articles included in this narrative review: 25** 

Screening process: All articles were screened for relevance. Articles that did not specifically address PA or were not conducted in the US were excluded.

#### Results **Barriers to PA** Social **Environmental Culture and** Intrinsic Lifestyle Other Fear Resources Support Factors Factors Changes after Resettlement Fear of Lack of Weather Motivation Walking Access/ Interests Support Alone Familiarity PA no Longer Affordability Incorporated into ADLs Park Access Chronic Language Lack of Illness Fear of Injury Misconceptions Lack of Time **Fransportation** Childcare about Exercise Crime/Gang Change in **Cultural Roles** related Pain after Environment/ Fear of Poverty Activity Diet after Exercise Too Many Harrassment Options -Resettlement Overwhelming Lack of No Women Cleanliness Fear of Making Suitable Only Exercise Outdoors Behavior Clothing Space More Time Changes Spent Indoors 1 Article Lack of Space Religion Uncertainty for Group PA about the Occupation 2-3 Articles Requires Less future 4-5 Articles 6+ Articles Facilitators for PA Motivating Free/Low Cost Community Social Education Activities Programs PA Options Support Culturally General Culturally **Group Physical** Low Cost PA Exercise Appropriate Sensitive/ Activities Activities Education Dance Relevant Programs Education Childcare Motivating PA Culturally Regarding Services Appropriate/ Basic Lifestyle Safe Space Modification Classes Offered at a Familiar Facility

#### Conclusions

Physical therapists are in a unique position for promoting healthy behaviors in their patients and community. They need to be aware of identified barriers and successful interventions in order to facilitate sustainable PA to improve refugees' quality of life.

A framework can be developed for supporting PA that can be used in creating interventions and community programs.

Further research needs to be done confirming these barriers and facilitators. From this, an assessment tool can be designed for programs to identify specific needs of the refugee population



#### References

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