

Self-reflected Health Status of Refugees: A reflection of the healthy immigrant effect?

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Outline

- Background Information
- Study design
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion



Healthy Immigrant Effect (HIE)

- immigrants are generally healthier than the Canadian born upon arrival, but their health deteriorates over time



Current evidence in immigrants

- Pregnancy outcomes
- BMI measurement
- Cardiovascular outcomes



Current evidence: Self-reported health

National Population Health Survey/
Longitudinal Survey of
Immigrants

In general, would you say your current
health is:

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor



- Initial data
 - Immigrants 6 months after arrival -97% rate health as good, very good or excellent
 - Canadian born - 88%
- Follow-up data
 - Deterioration of health: RR 2.8 of transition from good/v. good/excellent to fair/poor in recent (<ten yrs) non-European immigrants.



Proposal

Evaluate the self-reflected health status of refugee clients at Access Alliance: does it reflect the healthy immigrant effect (HIE)?



Healthy 'refugee' effect?

Immigrants

Majority
economic/family
Skilled workers
Increased support

Refugees

Harsh
circumstances
Limited skills
Less support



Healthy 'refugee' effect?

Hypothesis: Refugees should see an improvement to health status with time in Canada - in contrast with the HIE



Study design

- Cross sectional survey of clients administered at Access Alliance Community Health Centre from Dec/08 to Jan/09
- Jointly administered with a survey on determinants of health

Questionnaire

1. How old are you: _____
(If client is under 18, do not continue with the survey)
2. What is your gender? Male Female Other
3. Are you pregnant? (ask female patients only) Yes No
4. What is the reason for your visit to the Access Alliance clinic or satellite today?
5. In what year/month did you come to Canada to live?
6. What was your immigration status on arrival in Canada?
 - Government Assisted Refugee (referred by COSTI)
 - Privately Sponsored Refugee (by charity, church or community group)
 - Refugee Claimant
 - Landed Immigrant
 - Other (Please specify): _____
7. In general, would you say your current health is:
 - Excellent
 - Very Good
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
8. Since your arrival to Canada, do you feel that your health has:
 - Improved Stayed the same Deteriorated (Gotten worse)



Results



Results

- General characteristics and country of origin for survey participants as compared to all Access alliance clients.

		Survey participants	Access Alliance Clients
Age	18-24	14.5%	17%
	25-44	63.5%	58%
	45-64	19.5%	21%
	65+	1.5%	3%
Gender	Female	67.5%	61%
	Male	32%	39%
	Other	0.5%	
Country of birth	Afghanistan	18.4%	13.7%
	Myanmar/Burma	13.2%	6.3%
	Colombia	8.9%	7.3%
	Portugal	6.8%	6.3%
	Iran	5.3%	3.5%
	Brazil	4.7%	4.3%
	Eritrea	4.2%	0.9%
	Thailand	3.2%	2.9%
	Mexico	2.6%	4.8%
	Ethiopia	1.6%	2.1%
	Argentina	1.1%	1.7%
	Iraq	1.1%	1.0%
	Sudan	1.1%	2.5%
	Pakistan	1.1%	2.1%
	Bangladesh	0.5%	3.5%
	Somalia	0.5%	0.7%
	India	0.0%	1.3%
Sri Lanka	0.0%	0.9%	

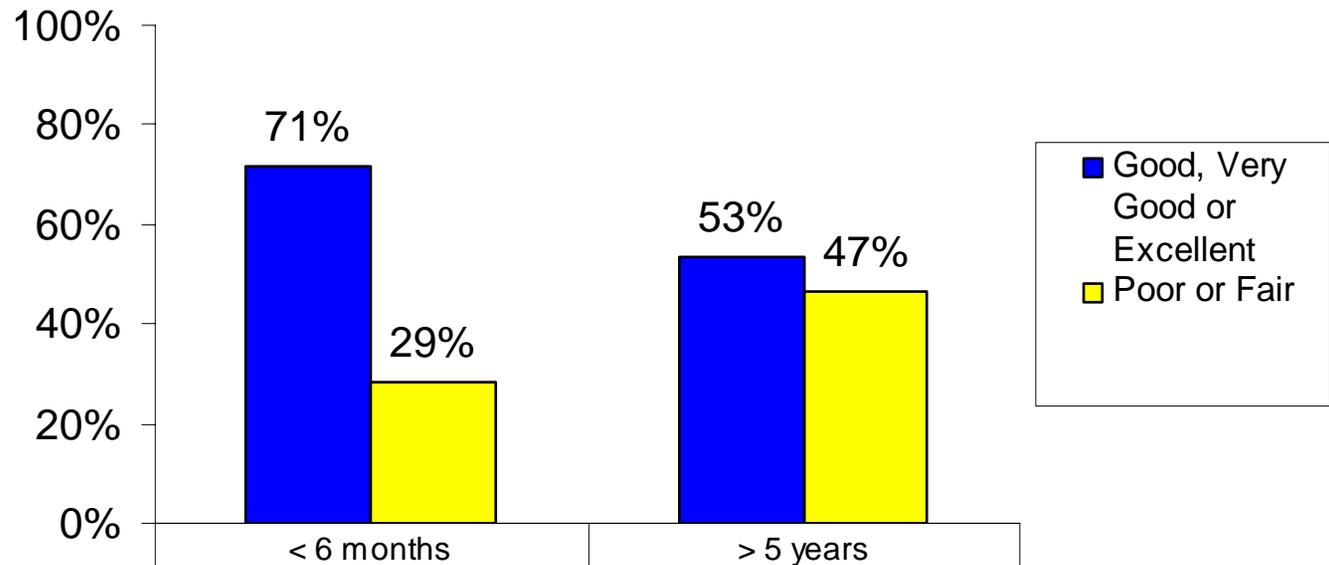
Results

- Comparison of general characteristics of the sub-groups

	Under 6 months	Over 5 years
N=	17	18
Age	39 years	41 years
Gender Male	53%	15%
Female	47%	85%
Country of origin		
Middle East	23.6%	5.6%
South Asia	17.7%	11.2%
South-east Asia	17.7%	0%
Africa	11.8%	0%
Central/South America	23.6%	50.4%
Western Europe	0%	16.8%
Eastern Euope	0%	5.6%

Results

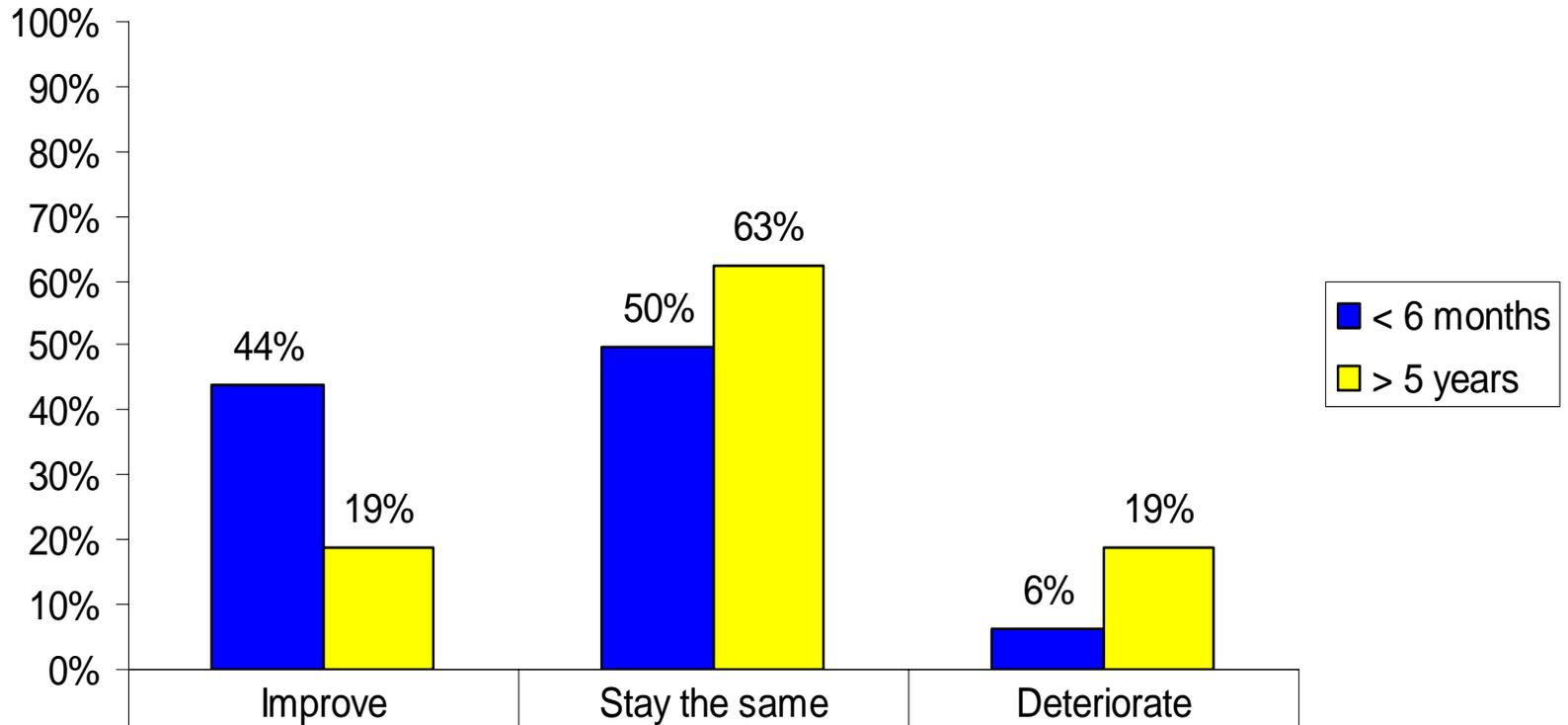
Self reflected health Status of new and long term refugees



■ Good, Very Good or Excellent	71%	53%
■ Poor or Fair	29%	47%

Time in Canada

Change in health status



< 6 months	44%	50%	6%
> 5 years	19%	63%	19%



Discussions

- Refugees (duration <6 months) have lower self-reflected health scores compared to immigrants and the Canadian born (71% vs 97% vs 88% respectively)
- New refugees found to rank their self-reported health higher than long term refugees



Discussions

- But there is some evidence to suggest that refugees self-reflected health status deteriorates over time in Canada
- Opposes initial hypothesis and supports the extension of the healthy immigrant effect to refugees.



Discussions

- Possible reasons?:
 - No selective immigration policies that pre-selects the 'healthy'
 - Greater susceptibility to determinants of health - housing, income, poor education
 - Multiple barriers to accessing health - language, transportation, education



Limitations

1. Cross sectional nature - do not follow participants
2. Only 114 participants included. Sub-groups have small numbers
3. Effect of acute illness
4. Administered at Access Alliance - only clients in the office participated
5. Translated into 5 languages only



Conclusion

- Proposal: Evaluate the self-reflected health status of refugee clients at Access Alliance: does it reflect the healthy immigrant effect (HIE)?
 - Refugees initially rank health lower than immigrant/Canadian counterparts
 - Not immune from HIE: decline in health status
 - Unexpected to our hypothesis
 - Complex relationship & multiple factors in refugee health transition



Conclusion

- Future directions:
 - Include in analysis group between 6 months and 5 years
 - How does this group compare?
 - Further analysis of determinants of health to determine if any correlation



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Questions?