

Experiences of refugees and asylum seekers towards access and utilisation of sexual health services: A systematic review

Citation

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Review question

RQ1: What are the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers towards utilising STIs and HIV testing and treatment services?

RQ2: What are the opportunities and challenges towards accessing STIs and HIV testing and treatment services?

Searches

The literature search will be conducted using the databases MEDLINE/PubMed, PsycINFO, Cumulative Index of Health and Allied Health (CINAHL) and Google Scholar. Qualitative and Mixed method primary research published in the English language that meets the inclusion criteria will be included in this review. The introduction of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 brought combating HIV/AIDS into the global mainstream and therefore studies published after January 2000 until February 2023 will be included in this review.

Types of study to be included

Studies included will be original/primary reports published in peer-reviewed journals that have used qualitative study design, including the qualitative part of the mixed method studies. The studies not reporting the sexual health services utilisation and access issues among refugees and asylums will be excluded.

Condition or domain being studied

Experiences and utilisation of sexually transmitted infections and HIV testing and treatments among refugees and asylum seekers in both developed and developing countries are the contexts of this review. Issues facing refugees and asylum seekers are some of the most complicated humanitarian problems globally. The UN Refugee Agency, UK reports that at least 89.3 million people worldwide have been forced to flee their homes (UNHCR UK, 2021). Among them, nearly 27.1 million are refugees and 4.6 million are asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2021). Evidence shows that the access and utilisation of sexual health services among these populations are comparatively limited.

Participants/population

The population who are identified as refugees and asylum seekers in the country of their residence. They may be of any age, sex, ethnicity, and from any location worldwide.

Intervention(s), exposure(s)

All studies reporting experiences and utilisation of health services related to HIV or STIs among refugees and asylum

seekers are to be included. The refugees and asylum seekers who utilise/are exposed to HIV or STIs testing and treatment services.

Comparator(s)/control

Experience and utilisation of health services related to HIV and STIs in the general population and other high-risk groups or utilisation of HIV or STIs testing and treatment services in the general population will be the comparators.

Context

The studies conducted worldwide reporting experience of service utilisation related to HIV or STIs among refugees and asylum seekers will be considered for this review.

Main outcome(s)

The main outcomes of the review are:

- Explore the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers towards STIs and HIV testing and treatment services
- Document the opportunities and challenges towards accessing STIs and HIV testing and treatment services among refugees and asylum seekers

Additional outcome(s)

None

Data extraction (selection and coding)

The screening of the study title, abstract and searching of the full-text article will be conducted by two reviewers. The quality, inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study will be further independently assessed by two reviewers. In case of disagreement, the final decision related to the exclusion or inclusion of the article in the review will be resolved by a discussion with the third member of the review team. Authors of papers will be contacted to request missing or additional data for clarification, where required. An electronic data extraction form/table will be used for included studies. Data extracted will include the title of the article, author(s), publication year, study setting, study sites, population characteristics, methods, findings and authors' conclusions.

Risk of bias (quality) assessment

The methodology and quality of the paper will be assessed appropriately. The Mixed Method Appraisal Tool (MMAT) checklist (Nha HONG et al., 2018) will be used for the quality assessment of qualitative and mixed-method studies.

Strategy for data synthesis

A narrative synthesis will be used to synthesise results from different studies included in the review. The findings from the qualitative studies will be presented thematically in narrative form. As this review does not intend to use meta-analysis, the Synthesis Without Meta-analysis (SWiM) reporting guidelines will be utilised to report the findings within this review. This will support the studies to systematically present the analysis from the findings, present key findings and summary. The main findings from each review will be presented in tabular form and the relevant themes identified during data synthesis will be discussed in detail. A narrative synthesis of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers towards their utilisation of sexual health services will be captured. Similarly, the opportunities and challenges towards accessing sexual health services will be reported. Sexual health services in this context will include sexually transmitted infections and HIV testing and treatment services.

Analysis of subgroups or subsets

None planned

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Type and method of review

Narrative synthesis, Systematic review

Anticipated or actual start date

03 April 2023

Anticipated completion date

31 October 2023

Funding sources/sponsors

50 Hours Research Assistant time funded through the International Collaborative Fund, University of Huddersfield

Conflicts of interest

Language

English

Country

England, Ireland, Scotland

Stage of review

Review Ongoing

Subject index terms status

Subject indexing assigned by CRD

Subject index terms

MeSH headings have not been applied to this record

Date of registration in PROSPERO

14 March 2023

Date of first submission

14 March 2023

Stage of review at time of this submission

The review has not started

Stage	Started	Completed
Preliminary searches	No	No
Piloting of the study selection process	No	No
Formal screening of search results against eligibility criteria	No	No
Data extraction	No	No
Risk of bias (quality) assessment	No	No
Data analysis	No	No

The record owner confirms that the information they have supplied for this submission is accurate and complete and they understand that deliberate provision of inaccurate information or omission of data may be construed as scientific misconduct.

The record owner confirms that they will update the status of the review when it is completed and will add publication details in due course.

Versions

14 March 2023