

Descriptive Analysis of Community-Based Needs among Asylum Seekers in New England before and after COVID-19

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Abstract : The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically altered the landscape of asylum medicine. Brown Human Rights Asylum Clinic (BHRAC) is a medical-student-run asylum clinic that provides pro-bono medical evaluations and forensic affidavits for individuals seeking asylum in New England. After the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020, BHRAC experienced numerous changes both in the number of clients requesting services as well as in the resource needs of these clients. Uniquely, BHRAC assesses the needs of clients during their affidavit interview and seeks to address these needs by connecting clients to local community organizations and resources. Data regarding the specific needs of clients range from 2019-present day. Analysis of internal BHRAC's internal data suggested a small increase in requests for assistance with light and gas (from 5% of total resource requests pre-COVID to 11%), as well as a decrease in requests for mental health services (from 20% of resources pre-COVID to 13% post-COVID). Furthermore, BHRAC witnessed a decline in clinic volume during the second half of 2020. In short, our data suggest that the pandemic affected asylum seekers' access to medico-legal services and the resources they need. Future research with larger sample sizes and in other geographic locations is required to determine the holistic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on asylum seekers.

Keywords : asylum clinic, asylum medicine, COVID, social determinants of health

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