

The Uninsured Narrative: Healthcare Experiences of Refugees, Immigrants, and Asylum Seekers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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Abstract : Introduction: Uninsured refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers face critical challenges in accessing healthcare, often caused by educational and communication barriers, immigration uncertainties, and healthcare costs, among others. In Wisconsin, these populations navigate complex intersections of health inequities and limited resources, making exploring their lived experiences and health outcomes critical. Aims/Objectives: This study aims to understand how lack of health coverage affects healthcare access for this population and strategies healthcare professionals can use to better support individuals without health insurance. Methods/Processes: A systematic literature review was conducted using the 2022 Annual Survey of Refugees public use data file. Databases like PubMed, Medline, and Google Scholar were used. Additionally, observational ethnography during workshops and fieldwork experience of working with refugee communities in Milwaukee further revealed the challenges uninsured refugees and asylum seekers face in accessing healthcare resources. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key trends and experiences related to health access and outcomes. Results/Outcomes: Our study found that healthcare costs, limited English proficiency, and understanding of the complex U.S. health system significantly delayed medical care seeking for these populations. Despite these barriers, these populations demonstrated remarkable resilience, connecting with community networks and informal support systems to navigate health challenges. The findings suggested that healthcare providers can support them by providing culturally competent resources, building trusting relationships and partnerships, and encouraging healthcare providers to be inclusive while showing empathy towards healthcare delivery. Conclusion: This study contributes to scholarship by highlighting challenges in healthcare access for uninsured refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrant populations in Wisconsin and advocating for the urgent need for policies that prioritize inclusivity, trust, and confidentiality in healthcare delivery. Our study concludes that evaluation measures need to be in place to ensure the development of culturally tailored community health guides to address other social determinants of health, continuous advocacy for policy reforms, and collaboration with local agencies to bridge gaps in healthcare services.

Keywords : narrative, refugees, asylum seekers, uninsured, healthcare

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