

# President's Letter

January 13, 2016



**Jonathan Greenland**  
MD, FRCP  
President

## Family Physicians Needed in Syrian Refugee Crisis

Dear Colleagues:

The NLMA is asking all family physicians in the province, particularly those in the St. John's metro region, to consider accepting Syrian refugee families into their community practices.

The Government of Canada has begun the massive task of transporting 25,000 Syrian refugees for resettlement in cities throughout the country. Since January 1, 2016, St. John's has received more than 115 Syrian refugees and that number is expected to grow over the coming months.

The Refugee Health Clinic located at the Health Sciences Centre in St. John's, provides initial medical screening and assessment for roughly 150 refugees who routinely arrive in the province each year. The clinic is co-led by Dr. Pauline Duke and Dr. Christine Bassler who work in partnership with Memorial University's Family Practice Unit and the Association for New Canadians.

Most refugees are absorbed into the private practices of Dr. Duke and Dr. Bassler once they have been initially assessed by the Refugee Health Clinic. However, these physicians are not able to absorb the unprecedented wave of Syrian refugees arriving in such a short period of time. They are appealing to their colleagues for help once the refugees' initial assessments are complete.

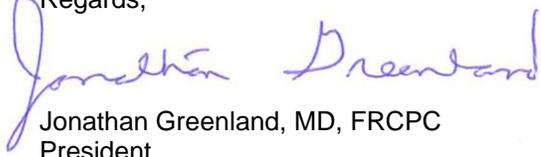
The Refugee Health Clinic will continue to conduct the initial work-up assessments, screening, medical histories, physicals, bloodwork and arrange any urgent treatment or referrals for refugees prior to being matched with a family physician. In addition, Drs. Duke and Bassler will act as a resource for physicians in the community and will be available to answer any questions related to refugee health care. Each refugee will have an MCP card, and physicians will be able to bill MCP like any other patient.

The NLMA appreciates that many family physicians have stopped taking new patients, but we ask that you consider this humanitarian crisis as an extraordinary case. Many of these refugees have been deprived of basic primary health care for several years due to the ongoing Syrian civil war that has forcibly displaced 4.5 million refugees. Many have lost loved ones and have witnessed terrible violence.

The majority of Syrian refugees are arriving from urban areas of Lebanon and Jordan, while others are arriving from camps in Turkey. Although some refugees have not received primary health care since fleeing Syria, most are generally healthy and well-educated.

If you are considering accepting a refugee family into your practice please contact Dr. Pauline Duke by emailing Jill Colbourne at [Jill.Colbourne@med.mun.ca](mailto:Jill.Colbourne@med.mun.ca) or by calling (709) 864-6549.

Regards,



Jonathan Greenland, MD, FRCP  
President



**Newfoundland &  
Labrador Medical  
Association**  
164 MacDonald Dr.  
St. John's, NL  
A1A 4B3  
(709) 726-7424  
Or 1-800-563-2003  
Fax: (709) 726-7525  
[www.nlma.nl.ca](http://www.nlma.nl.ca)  
[president@nlma.nl.ca](mailto:president@nlma.nl.ca)