

2019 Clifford E. Van Alstyne Award:

I would like to nominate Melissa Carruthers for the Clifford E. Van Alstyne Award for her work with the Mosaic Refugee Health Clinic in Calgary. Melissa works in Calgary with Alberta Health Services, Environmental Public Health (EPH) as an Enteric Disease Specialist with the Disease Control Team (DCT). The Mosaic Refugee Health Clinic provides comprehensive primary care services for newcomers who arrive as refugees for the first two years in Canada, or until their refugee claim is accepted. Melissa identified that the clinic did not fully understand DCT's role in following up on notifiable diseases such as E. Coli and Giardia.

Recognizing the opportunity for a health equity approach, Melissa arranged for a meeting with representatives of the clinic with the goal of sharing information about EPH and to discuss how to best support the refugees. Calgary Zone MOH Dr. Judy Macdonald, DCT Manager Karen Clarke, DCT Coordinator Tara Hluchy also attended the meeting with the clinic's Primary Care Manager, the Director of Clinical Operations and the physician lead. Melissa provided an excellent presentation on EPH, and then specifically on the work of the DCT. This meeting was very helpful for the clinic and they asked for a copy of the presentation to share with their colleagues. One of the outcomes of the meeting was that the DCT will now have a direct number for nurses at the clinic to assist with discussions about cases and lab results. The clinic physician lead also asked about housing, bed bugs and other public health concerns for their patients. The clinic has been provided with direct contact details for the EPH team, and the offer was extended to provide further information sessions to the clinic about the other services EPH provides. The manager of the clinic also shared information on courses their staff take regarding trauma and coping mechanisms when dealing with refugees and hearing their stories of what they have gone through.

After the meeting Melissa designed a one-page information sheet on Giardiasis and exclusions to help the clinic understand the Alberta Health guidelines. We see this as the beginning of a great collaboration between EPH and the Mosaic Refugee Clinic that will provide enhanced support for this vulnerable population. Melissa is an active member of the Calgary Zone Health Equity Committee which promotes and connects Calgary Zone Safe Health Environments (SHE) staff with appropriate health equity learning opportunities and implements and executes initiatives/projects focusing on inequity in the populations we encounter on a daily basis. Melissa helped facilitate two "Working with Diversity in Mind" workshops that Calgary Zone SHE staff attended. She provided EPH specific scenarios to be used to facilitate discussion and worked with the workshop educator to provide a great learning opportunity for staff. We believe that Melissa's efforts make her a worthy recipient of the Clifford E. Van Alstyne Award, for going above and beyond her role within Public Health.

Submitted by: Lynne Navratil