



MEDICAL EDUCATION  
SCHOLARSHIP CENTRE

## Medical Education Scholarship Forum Proceedings

---

### **MUN Med Gateway: Experiences and benefits for student volunteers and newcomer refugees**

**Pauline Duke, Discipline of Family Medicine; Raymond Li, MD Student; Tilak Chawan, Gateway Participant, Association for New Canadians**

**Purpose:** MUN MED Gateway started out as a student-initiated project in 2005. After learning about refugee health in their clinical skills course, students were interested in finding a way to help refugees get better health care in St. John's while the students would also have a chance to practice their clinical skills. With support from faculty members in Medicine and in partnership with the Association for New Canadians and Eastern Health, Gateway was born. Over the years, Gateway has grown into a well-established service-learning program in the Faculty of Medicine. **Methods:** Each week, medical students meet with refugees who arrive in St. John's. Under the supervision of Dr. Pauline Duke and nurse Barbara Albrechtsons, student volunteers work with refugee participants to develop a health history (with questions ranging from major medical concerns to emotional health and well-being) and conduct a physical screening (that includes checking vision, dental, hearing, vaccination history, and providing a test for tuberculosis). Following the session, Gateway matches participants with a family doctor and sends the health history to them, and Gateway makes referrals to specialists for any health problems identified in the session. **Results:** All the work done in gateway sessions is an incredible process in itself, but the truly special part of Gateway (and the subject of this presentation) is found in the interactions between the students and participants. Participants have the opportunity to tell their story and feel welcomed and heard; students practice clinical skills, including the very important skill of listening with respect and empathy; and students also gain appreciation for the strength and resilience of newcomer refugees. **Conclusions:** MUN MED Gateway provides valuable services to newcomer refugees in accessing health care in St. John's and provides rich learning opportunities to medical students. Experiences in Gateway stay with volunteers and participants long after the session, shaping the way participants view their new community and the way volunteers view their future role as physicians.