Background

- Refugees often resettle in the host country with a substantial health burden: high rates of psychological distress and trauma, high rates of infection and parasitic disease from the country of origin, and the increased susceptibility to chronic diseases of the developed world.

- Health-illness transitions include the process of illness and recovery and access to healthcare services.

Methods

Purpose

- A systematic review was conducted, aimed at synthesizing peer-reviewed literature pertaining to health issues and health experiences among Afghans resettled in industrialized nations.

- Three databases (PsycInfo, CINAHL) were used to identify studies published between 1979 and 2015 that provided post resettlement experiences pertaining to health or illness.

Results

- In this study, data was examined according to three components of transition conditions of the Transitions Theory: personal, community and societal level factors that influence positive or negative adjustment were analyzed.

Discussion

- This study suggests that there is a paucity in research regarding the health and illness experiences of Afghan refugees and little is known about the post-resettlement health trajectory of Afghans.

- Findings from qualitative and quantitative studies among Afghan refugees suggest that Afghan refugees may be less likely to utilize health services, particularly preventive screening services.

- Social and community level factors that may influence help-seeking among this population and should be considered. It would also be important for providers to facilitate or assist in navigating health services, address language barriers and accommodate preference for female providers.

- Research among Afghan refugees indicate that family ties and kinship are central to the cultural values of this population and provides a basis to further explore social level influences on health promotion and disease prevention.

- Limitations of published incidence and prevalence reports among Afghans are limited due to the inaccurate racial categorization of Afghans in public health data.

- This review is preliminary work needed for developing a framework for health promotion and hypothesis-driven quantitative study among Afghan refugees, informed and guided by the Theory of Transitions.