

## Refugee and Immigrant Health

A Handbook for Health Professionals

We live in an age of constantly shifting populations, as immigrants and refugees seek a safe haven from war, famine, and poverty. The healthcare of these dispossessed people is now a stark challenge not only in zones of conflict but in those wealthier countries that have offered sanctuary. The book is based on the authors' combined 40-plus years of work as clinicians and teachers in refugee and immigrant health. It is written with clinicians and students in mind and is thus practical, yet theory based, so it can be used in the field and as a teaching text. The book bridges physical health (highlighting infectious disease risks), mental health, and spiritual issues, while encompassing population-specific information on history of immigration, culture and social relations, communications, religions, pregnancy and childbirth, end-of-life issues, and health screening. It also details health beliefs and practices of over 30 ethnic groups commonly found as refugees or immigrants from more than 40 countries.

**Charles Kemp** has worked in refugee health for more than 20 years. He teaches courses in community health and hospice/palliative care at Baylor University and works as a family nurse practitioner in the Agape Clinic, serving immigrants and refugees in inner-city Dallas, Texas. He is author of two books, more than 50 articles for professional journals, and 30 papers for professional meetings. He also maintains websites on cross-cultural health, infectious diseases, and hospice care.

**Lance Rasbridge**, a medical anthropologist, coordinates the Refugee Outreach Program of Parkland Hospital, Dallas, Texas, which he cofounded in 1991. Previously he was a lecturer in Southeast Asian Studies, at the University of Texas at Dallas. He served on the initial Metroplex Refugee Network board, was past president of Refugee Services of Texas, and currently presides over the Center for Survivors of Torture.

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Charles Kemp and Lance A. Rasbridge

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# Refugee and Immigrant Health

A Handbook for Health Professionals

Charles Kemp, F.N.P., F.A.A.N. and

Lance A. Rasbridge, Ph.D.



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**To those seeking refuge and to those giving refuge**

**In Memoriam**

**Sergio Vieira de Mello, 1949–2003**

**United Nations diplomat whose light brought hope to the countless displaced and oppressed from Bangladesh, Cyprus, Mozambique, Peru, Lebanon, Cambodia, the Balkans, East Timor, and finally Iraq. Let it shine.**

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## Preface

Beginning with the first waves of bewildered Southeast Asian rice farmers arriving to the inner city in the early 1980s, up through the recent group of Somali Bantus, many never having seen a toilet or even a staircase, we are entering our third decade of witnessing, and indeed participating in the resettlement of refugees and immigrants. And what a long, strange trip it has been! We offer this book in a spirit of respect for the people who have passed through, for their strength, their dignity, their struggles, their failures, their triumphs.

An early caution: In the second section of the book we present a large amount of culture-specific information in which complex beliefs and practices are reduced to generalities. Not everything presented on a specific culture or group applies to every member of that culture or group. Expecting individuals or even populations to conform to information presented on a culture leads directly to stereotyping and misperception. The culture-specific information is given as a means of *beginning* to understand people from a particular culture. From this beginning, we build understanding of individuals, families, and cultures.

The book is part of our ongoing efforts to increase understanding of refugee and immigrant health specifically, and cross-cultural health generally. The book is organized philosophically and conceptually on building cultural competence (see Chapter 1) and is divided into two Parts corresponding to the two components or sets of skills necessary to achieving full cultural competence.

- Generic cultural competence is knowledge and skills applicable to any patient or community cross-cultural encounter. To this end the first Part of the book looks at broad issues related to refugee and immigrant health in particular and cross-cultural health in general.
- Specific cultural competence is knowledge and skills applicable to patients and communities from specific cultural backgrounds. The second Part of the book examines specific populations in terms of background, history of immigration,



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culture and social relations, communications, religion, health beliefs and practices, pregnancy and childbirth, end of life, and health problems and screening. The populations discussed were selected on the basis of recent history of significant immigration to the West. Information came both from the literature and from participant observation and was reviewed by community experts when possible.

All the chapters are authored by Charles Kemp and Lance Rasbridge except where noted.

A brief word about us, the authors: Charles Kemp, a family nurse practitioner, teaches courses in community health and end-of-life care at Baylor University Louise Herrington School of Nursing, works at the Agape Clinic serving refugees and immigrants, and gardens in his spare time. Lance Rasbridge, a medical anthropologist, is the co-ordinator for the Refugee Outreach Program for the Dallas County Hospital District, is involved in community development in Cambodia, and finds peace in building furniture.

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Parkland Health and Hospital System and the dedicated Refugee Outreach Program team, from whom I learn every day; to my parents, who provided not only role models but opportunities; and to my wife, Diane and son, Dylan for unwavering love and support. – L. A. R.

Deepest appreciation to the volunteers and staff at Agape Clinic, especially Bobbie Baxter, Lupe Springer, and Leslie Kemp; to the Agape patients and the Old East Dallas community; to my colleagues at Baylor, especially Judy Lott, Phyllis Karns, Kathryn Leonard, Patti Cade, and Becky Robbins; to my students; to the men in my Bible study, Open Ring Class, and our teacher, Dan Foster; to the congregations of First Presbyterian Church; Grace United Methodist Church, and GraceLife Fellowship; to the men and women of East Dallas Police Storefront (you too, Gilbert); to the United States Marine Corps; to faculty and staff at St. Marks School of Texas, especially Arnold Holtberg; and to Jeff Wiseman. And above all, my love, respect, and gratitude to my wife, Leslie and my son, David. – C. K.

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[http://www3.baylor.edu/~Charles\\_Kemp/refugee\\_health.htm](http://www3.baylor.edu/~Charles_Kemp/refugee_health.htm)

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## Note on the photographs

Most of the photographs in this book were taken by our friend and colleague, Judy Walgren. Judy, Victoria Loe, and Gayle Reaves shared the 1994 Pulitzer Prize for international reporting for a series of 14 stories that examined the epidemic of violence against women across the world. Judy also wrote and took the photographs for *The Lost Boys of Natinga: A School for Southern Sudan's Young Refugees*. She is involved with a project addressing the problem of child labor (Child Labor and the Global Village: Photography for Social Change at [www.childlaborphotoproject.org/index.html](http://www.childlaborphotoproject.org/index.html)) and she continues in other ways to bring light into the darkness. Judy can be contacted at [www.jujuphoto.com/](http://www.jujuphoto.com/).