M8 Alliance Webinar Series on Migrant and Refugee Health

**Organized by the M8 Alliance
under the leadership of the Sapienza University of Rome**

Digital Solutions for Migrant and Refugee Health

19 April 2021, 14:00 – 16:00 CET

Registration:
https://www.worldhealthsummit.org/m8-alliance/migrant-refugee-health.html

**Webinar in cooperation with the
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine**

The M8 Alliance Webinar Series on **Migrant and Refugee Health**, is a **new format** which aims at bringing together experts from across the M8 Alliance to discuss global, develop innovative and collaborative answers and promote science-based policy advice. Each lecture will last 90 minutes and different speakers from within the M8 Alliance and beyond.

WELCOME

Luciano Saso, Sapienza University of Rome, Coordinator M8 Alliance Webinar Series on Migrant and Refugee Health

PANEL SESSION
chaired by *Johanna Hanefeld,* Director of the LSHTM office c/o Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin

A systems level approach to understand, and improve, access to quality health services for forcibly displaced communities
Muhammad Hamid Zaman, Howard Hughes Medical Institute Professor, Professor, Departments of Biomedical Engineering and International Health
Boston University

Uses of Blockchain Technology in Support of Migrant and Refugee Health
Tiago Nunes and Paulo Rupino da Cunha, Coimbra Health, Portugal

How digital space empower refugees and asylum seekers? Examples from a rights-based perspective
İlke Şanlıer Yüksel, Migration and Development Studies Research Center (MIGCU), Çukurova University

Using WhatsApp Messenger for Health Systems Research with Migrants and Mobile Groups: Findings from a literature review
Karima Manji, Researcher, Department of Global Health and Development, LSHTM, Berlin Office

Research on the move: WhatsApp as a tool for data collection with migrant populations understanding the intersections between mobility and health in South Africa
Thea de Gruchy, African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS), Wits University, South Africa

Covid-19, Migrant Health and Digital
Gina Netto, Reader/Associate Professor, International and Forced Migration, The Urban Institute, Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh, UK

Q&A

CONCLUSIONS

Rapporteur: Stephen Matlin, Visiting Professor, Institute of Global Health Innovation, Imperial College London, UK

DESCRIPTION

This session focuses on the role of digital tools and how these are used by migrants and mobile population in their health and health seeking behavior, as well as their application in research on migration. Researchers from the UK, Portugal, Turkey and the US will present emerging findings from amongst others from research with migrants and refugee populations in Yemen, Malaysia and Portugal on different usages of digital tools in improving health and access to health services for migrants. Research focuses on different types of technical tools, blockchain technology as well as tailored apps and the use of online information by migrants. In addition, Dr Karima Manji from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine will present the findings of a scoping review on the use of digital tools in research with migrants and mobile populations.

SPEAKERS AND ABSTRACTS

Luciano Saso (Faculty of Pharmacy and Medicine, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy) received his PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences from Sapienza University in 1992. He is author of more than 250 scientific articles published in peer reviewed international journals with impact factor (SASO-L in www.pubmed.com, total impact factor > 800, H-index Google Scholar 47, Scopus 39). He coordinated several research projects and has been referee for many national and international funding agencies and international scientific journals in the last 30 years. Prof. Saso has extensive experience in international relations and he is currently Vice-Rector for European University Networks at Sapienza University of Rome. In the last 15 years, he participated in several projects and has been speaker and chair at many international conferences organised by the UNICA network of the universities from the Capitals of Europe (http://www.unica-network.eu/) and other university associations. Prof. Saso has been Member of the Steering Committee of UNICA for two mandates (2011-2015) and he is currently President of UNICA (2015-2023). Prof. Saso is a member of the executive committee of the M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies (https://www.worldhealthsummit.org/m8-alliance.html) and Coordinator of the M8 Alliance webinar series on Migrant and Refugee Health https://www.worldhealthsummit.org/m8-alliance/topics/migrant-and-refugee-health.html

Johanna Hanefeld, BA MSc PhD currently leads the LSHTM office in Berlin, a new collaboration with Charite Centre Global Health building LSHTM's presence in Europe. She is Associate Professor in Health Policy and Systems Research and currently leads the migration, gender and health systems (MiGHs) grant which seeks to analyse how migrants and mobile populations access services in South Africa. She is also the Director of the Centre for Health Protection at the Robert Koch-Institute (RKI) in Berlin.

A systems level approach to understand, and improve, access to quality health services for forcibly displaced communities

Muhammad Hamid Zaman, Howard Hughes Medical Institute Professor
Professor, Departments of Biomedical Engineering and International Health
Boston University

Access to quality health services remains one of the grandest, and most acute challenges for communities that are forcibly displaced from their homes due to conflict and persecution. While international and regional aid agencies try to provide health services to the displaced persons, these services often lack the basic quality needed to tackle the complex health challenges facing forcibly displaced communities. Poor quality medicines, for examples, increase mortality and morbidity, add additional financial strain on the vulnerable and exacerbate drug resistant infections. In this talk, I will discuss a systems level approach to address two complimentary aspects needed to improve health outcomes among forcibly displaced communities - namely access and quality. These issues are going to be even more relevant in the post-COVID-19 world where access to quality health services is likely to be negatively affected. Our approach to tackle the dual challenge of access and quality is rooted in a multi-disciplinary framework. This framework, on one hand includes computational modeling of health systems and basic science studies to understand the molecular mechanisms of disease, and on the other hand uses field surveys and policy gap analysis. Using case studies with a focus on Syrian refugees and internally displaced communities in Yemen, this talk will discuss a multi-disciplinary systems approach to improve access and quality of health services and how this approach can potentially improve health outcomes in the era of COVID-19.

Muhammad Hamid Zaman is Howard Hughes Medical Institute Professor of Biomedical Engineering at Boston University. A major research theme in his lab focuses on developing solutions to improve access to quality care in low income settings, including in refugee settlements. In addition to over 130 peer-reviewed research articles, he has also authored two books for broad audiences. His first book, *Bitter Pills* (Oxford University Press, 2018), looks at the global challenge of substandard and counterfeit drugs. His second book *Biography of Resistance* (Harper Collins, 2020), is focused on global antimicrobial resistance.It is a story of science and evolution that looks to history, culture, attitudes, our own individual choices and collective human behavior in creating one of the biggest public health challenges of our time.

Professor Zaman has also developed research and education programs focusing on refugee health at Boston University. He co-founded the university wide initiative on forced displacement in collaboration with academic, public and private sector partners in Lebanon, Uganda and Colombia. Professor Zaman has written extensively on innovation, refugee and global health in newspapers around the world. His newspaper columns have appeared in over 30 countries and have been translated into eight languages. He has won numerous awards for his teaching and research, the most recent being Guggenheim Fellowship (2020) for his work on antibiotic resistance in refugee camps.

Uses of Blockchain Technology in Support of Migrant and Refugee Health

Tiago Nunes and Paulo Rupino da Cunha, Coimbra Health, Portugal

We will discuss how Blockchain, the same digital technology that supports the Bitcoin cryptocurrency, can help with two critical problems when dealing with migrant and refugee health: (a) the lack of identification and (b) the unavailability of a personal health record. The former raises administrative barriers in healthcare access, even when the subjects are entitled to it. The latter hinders healthcare, as professionals must proceed without knowledge of the medical history, including existing clinical conditions, therapeutics, and diagnostic tests. The journey exacerbates both problems, as the migrants and refugees go through diverse countries, camps, and humanitarian teams.

Tiago Nunes has a Master's degree in Dental Medicine from the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Coimbra. He is lecturer and researcher at Faculty of Medicine of the University of Coimbra, Oral Medicine, Forensic Dentistry, Medical High Education and Member of the research team for Global Health of the University of Coimbra

Paulo Rupino da Cunha is Associate Professor of Information Systems with Habilitation and former head of the IS Group at the Faculty of Science and Technology of the University of Coimbra, Portugal. Paulo holds a Ph.D. (2001) and a M.Sc. (1997) in Informatics Engineering from the University of Coimbra. He has been Adjunct Associate Teaching Professor in the School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon, USA, from May 2009 to Dec 2012, and Visiting Associate at Brunel University, UK, from 2008 to 2010. He has been the Vice-President of the Board of Instituto Pedro Nunes and of IPN-Incubadora - the recipient of the 2010 Word's Best Science Based Incubator Award. From April 2009 to November 2019 he was Director of Informatics and Systems Lab of Instituto Pedro Nunes (IPN). For a period of three years, he was the elected Coordinator of the Informatics Engineering Chapter for the centre region of Portugal of the Portuguese Engineering Association (Ordem dos Engenheiros), and for a two year term he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Department of Informatics Engineering of the University of Coimbra. Has been involved in information systems and software engineering projects for several private and public organisations and regularly participates in the evaluation of R&D projects and start-up pitches. Presently focused on Blockchain, cloud, service systems and business models

How digital space empower refugees and asylum seekers? Examples from a rights-based perspective

İlke Şanlıer Yüksel, Migration and Development Studies Research Center (MIGCU), Çukurova University, Turkey

The summer of 2015 witnessed refugees crossing from Turkey towards Europe through the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea collectively creating a moral panic as well. During the passage of refugees, a bilateral discussion has started about the use of digital technologies. On one side of the debate, there were border closures, the raising of walls and digital control of all that, and on the other, new forms of communication or tools that gave refugees on the move the ability to find their way, connect and survive, forming the backbone of the network society. Biometric technologies, digital borders and technological surveillance are now at the centre of migration control. Therefore, the inclusion of digital tools, automation and artificial intelligence in the migration control mechanisms, that will decide who deserves to cross borders and who does not imprison migration and asylum regimes within the politics of securitization. However, the novel research agenda on the use of digital technologies from a rights-based perspective clearly shows that these technologies empower the very agency of migrants. In this talk, I will provide the examples of how connected refugees utilize these technologies to overcome information precarity with a specific focus on health-related issues, both at local and transnational levels, based on empirical data. We are talking about a wide spectrum ranging from the translation application used to explain the health problem to a physician who does not speak his/her language in any hospital, to finding an interlocutor/smuggler in Basmane for a dangerous journey from the sea. Or, we are talking about an empowerment network from the selfie, which is used to document and sent to those who remained behind after passing from Ayvalık coast to Lesbos, to developing a 3D printer that can produce prostheses for children living in Hatay who lost their limbs during the war.

İlke Şanlıer Yüksel is an associate professor in the School of Communications and serves as the Director of Migration and Development Studies Research Center (MIGCU) at Çukurova University. She has previously worked as a post-doctoral research fellow in the Migration Research Center at Koç University and as an assistant professor at Doğuş University in Istanbul. She got her BA degree from the Sociology Department at Boğaziçi University and a PhD degree from the Communication program at Anadolu University. Her research mainly focuses on the sociology of migration. She works on representations of migrants in mainstream media and media's role in diasporic cultures. She is also interested in transnational politics through mediated settings, visual culture and media ethnography. She has a long experience in field research and ethnographic research on migrants.

Using WhatsApp Messenger for Health Systems Research with Migrants and Mobile Groups: Findings from a literature review

Karima Manji, Researcher, Department of Global Health and Development
LSHTM, Berlin Office

The Migration, Gender and Health Systems (MiGHS) project is researching the impact of migration and mobility on the South African public healthcare system. We identified a gap in methodologies that are able to capture 'real-time' data about the healthcare seeking experiences with healthcare systems that migrant and mobile populations have over time and place. WhatsApp Messenger provides new and affordable opportunities for health research across time and place, potentially addressing the challenges of maintaining contact and participation involved in research with migrant and mobile populations - when they cross international borders, for example. However, little is known about the opportunities and challenges associated with the use of WhatsApp as a tool for health research. To address this gap, I led a scoping review of published health research that uses WhatsApp as a data collection tool. I will discuss our approach and the findings of the review, which is being published in Health Policy and Planning. A particularly noteworthy finding across the studies reviewed is the lack of attention paid to research ethics, including protecting participants' privacy. This finding is concerning, given the well documented sensitivities that can emerge when conducting research with migrant and mobile groups. To address these and other issues identified, I offer recommendations for researchers interested in exploring the use of WhatsApp as a research tool.

Karima Manji is a social science researcher in global health at the LSHTM Office in Berlin. She has an MSc in Public Health and a PhD in Public Health & Policy, both from the LSHTM. Her PhD explored the role of gender-related social norms in sustaining partner violence in Mwanza, Tanzania. She currently conducts research as a part of a grant that explores the intersection of migration, gender and effects on health systems in South Africa – the MiGHS grant. Before joining the MiGHS project, she was engaged as a research consultant for various developmental organisations and research institutes, working at the humanitarian development nexus, on applying social norms theory to prevent gender-based violence and violence against children.

Research on the move: WhatsApp as a tool for data collection with migrant populations understanding the intersections between mobility and health in South Africa

Thea de Gruchy[1], African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS), Wits University

Reflecting global norms, South Africa is associated with high levels of cross-border and internal population mobility, yet migration-aware health system responses are lacking. One key methodological challenge limiting current research and, consequently, the development of evidence-informed responses to migration and health is the lack of methodologies that are able to capture 'real-time' data about health needs and healthcare seeking experiences over both time and place. I will reflect on a four-month pilot project, which explored the use of WhatsApp Messenger, and assessed its feasibility as a research tool that would address this challenge. WhatsApp was used in conjunction with Survey Node, an online platform that allows for the automatic administration of surveys through WhatsApp, to administer monthly surveys to a group of 11 participants between October 2019 and January 2020. I will present the opportunities and challenges identified through the research as the starting point from which to discuss the ethics and practicalities of digital research with migrant and mobile populations. The success of the pilot indicates that WhatsApp can be used as a tool for data collection with migrant and mobile populations. However, key practical and ethical challenges remain and require due consideration by researchers. Constant updates to WhatsApp, which affect both function and data security, require continuous assessment and adaptation by researchers. While WhatsApp provides numerous opportunities for research with migrant and mobile populations, particularly during the Covid19 pandemic, its ease and familiarity to researchers and participants alike requires additional measures to ensure that ethical standards are met.

Thea de Gruchy is a post-doctoral researcher at the ACMS working on migration and health. Since the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic in South Africa, much of Thea's work has pivoted to exploring the effect of the pandemic and implications of the South African state's response to the pandemic for migrant and mobile populations. As part of this work, Thea helps to coordinate the Migration and Coronavirus in Southern African group (MiCoSA). Her PhD research, which was supervised by Jo Vearey, funded by the Wellcome Trust and part of the Migration and Health Project (maHp) at ACMS, centred on questions of policy process and asked how policy is made and influenced in South Africa.

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[1] *Co-authors/research team: Jo Vearey, Calvin Opiti, Langelihle Mlotshwa, Karima Manji & Johanna Hanefeld*

Covid-19, Migrant Health and Digital

Gina Netto, Reader/Associate Professor,International and Forced Migration, The Urban Institute, Heriot Watt University,Edinburgh, UK

Over the past 12 months, the magnitude of the challenges facing refugees and other migrants and the organisations which work with them has been magnified beyond what could have been imagined by Covid-19. While the new vaccination strategies bring optimism that it will be possible to control the spread of the disease, much remains to be done to ensure the most marginalized populations are supported until they are targeted by vaccination strategies. Digital has a critical role to play in supporting migrant health. An established body of research has already revealed that mobile technology enables refugees and other migrants to communicate with family and friends transnationally, access information and sources of support; and represent themselves (Dekker et al, 2018; Donà, G and Godin, M, 2019; Harney, 2013). Mobile technology may also facilitate pathways to housing or employment (Martin-Shields et al, 2019) and health services, privileging those with access to such technology, but also giving rise to concern that those without such access may be disadvantaged. (Georgiou, 2019; Leung, 2018; Marler, 2018). Within the context of Covid-19, digital tools can be used to communicate accurate information about the disease, such as how to recognise symptoms, what preventative measures to take, government guidance, sources of medical and other assistance, and evolving vaccination strategies. Since this is a new and rapidly developing field with huge transformative potential, it is important to share experiences of innovation and good practice in this area. One example of this is a multilingual Covid-19 App that has been developed to assist Rohingya refugees in Malaysia based on research carried out by a cross-disciplinary team based at Heriot Watt University. Supported by Global Challenges Research Funding, the research and the application which followed from the research was developed through partnership with a local refugee NGO and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

As Reader/Associate Professor in International and Forced Migration at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, *Gina Netto* has worked extensively on access and use of a variety of health services and health promotion interventions for migrant and minority ethnic communities. She has also examined pathways to housing and housing exclusion, and participation in the labour market among these communities. Research funders have included the European Commission, the National Health Service and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. While most of her work has been undertaken within the Western European context, more recently, she has engaged in research with refugees in Malaysia, Bangladesh and Kenya. Gina has worked with a wide range of organisations, including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the EU-funded International Centre for Migration Policy Development, various government committees and refugee and migrant organisations. She is a member of the Scottish Government's COVId-19 and Ethnicity Expert Reference Group and its Labour Market Strategy Group.

Background

This webinar is part of the **M8 Alliance Webinar Series on Migrant and Refugee Health,** organized by the M8 Alliance under the leadership of Prof. Luciano Saso.

The **M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies** is an unique international network of 30 leading international academic health centers, universities and research institutions, all of which are committed to improving global health and working with political and economic decision-makers to develop science-based solutions to health challenges worldwide.

Migrant and Refugee Health has been a focus topic of the M8 Alliance since 2016. Regular sessions at the World Health Summit and dedicated expert meetings have laid the basis for effective international research networks. The webinar series builds on this tradition and uses the opportunities of digital technologies to involve even more experts from around the world.

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Further information:
https://www.worldhealthsummit.org/m8-alliance/topics/migrant-and-refugee-health.html
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