Health service utilization and access to medicines among Syrian refugee children in Jordan

ABSTRACT: Background: With over one million Syrian refugee children in the region, we undertook this study to characterize care-seeking behaviors and health service utilization for child refugees with the aim of informing humanitarian programming for non-camp settings in Jordan. Methods: A survey of Syrian refugees living outside of camps in Jordan was conducted using a 125 ? 12 cluster design with probability proportional to size sampling to obtain a representative sample. The questionnaire focused on access to health services, including a module on care seeking for children. Results: Care seeking was high with 90.9% of households with a child less than 18 years seeking medical care the last time it was needed. Households most often sought care for children in the public sector (54.6%), followed by private (36.5%) and charity sectors (8.9%). Among child care seekers, 88.6% were prescribed medication during the most recent visit, 90.6% of which obtained the medication. Overall, 49.4% of households reported out-of-pocket expenditures for either the consultation or prescribed medications at the most recent visit (mean $US21.1 and median $US0). Conclusions: Syrian refugees had good access to care for their sick children at the time of the survey; however, this has likely deteriorated since the survey because of the withdrawal of free access for refugees. The number of refugees in Jordan and relative accessibility of care has resulted in a large burden on the health system; the Jordanian government will require additional support if current levels of health access are to be maintained for Syrian refugees

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