

Primary Health Care (PHC) Registered Nurses (RNs) as facilitators of healthcare access for recent immigrants in Ontario: An interpretive descriptive study

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Introduction

- Recent immigrants experience inequities in accessing health care related to unique barriers which may contribute to poorer health status compared to their established and native-born counterparts.
- Registered Nurses (RNs) working in primary health care (PHC) have the competencies and are well-positioned to facilitate healthcare access for immigrants.

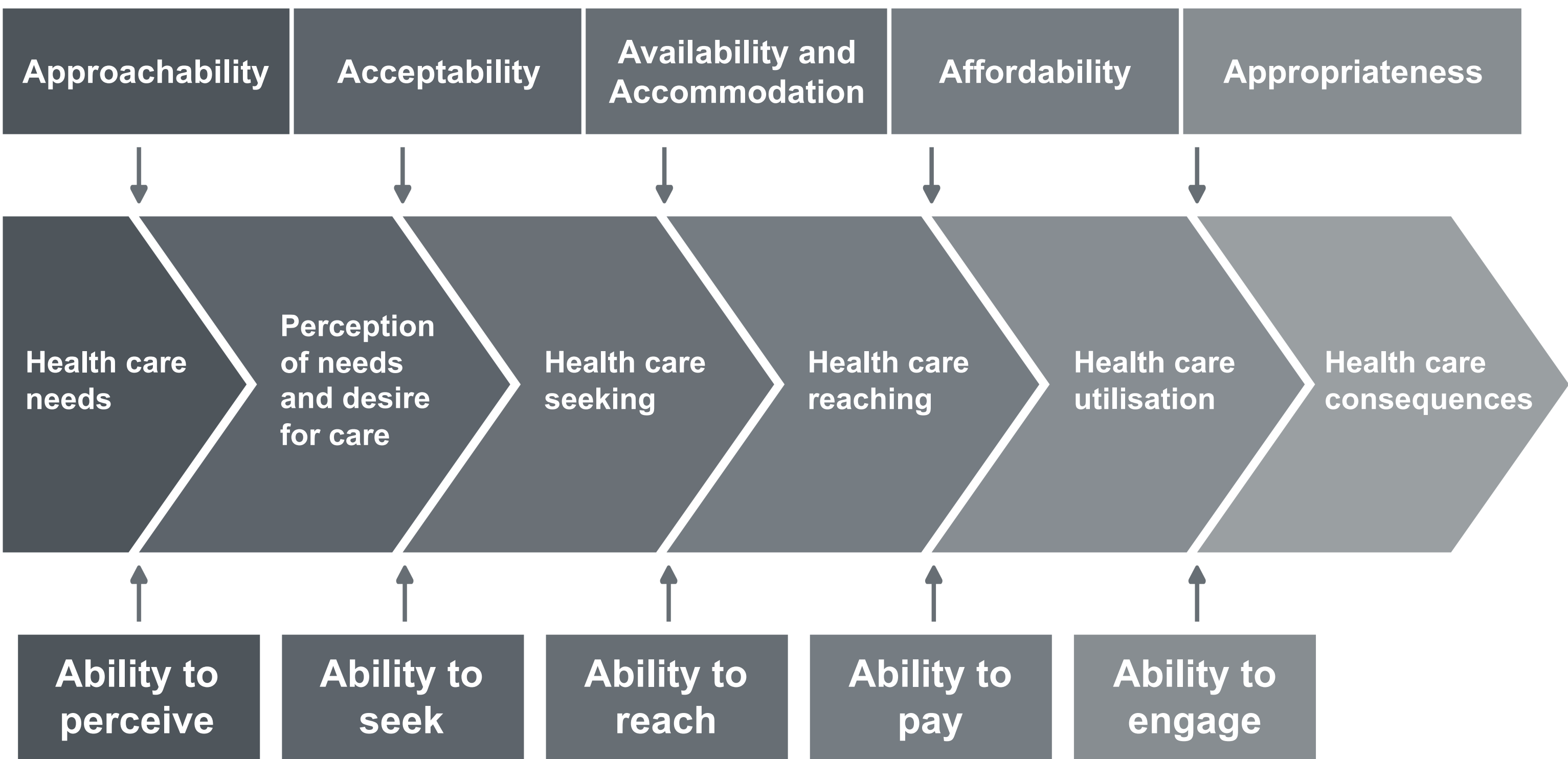
Objective

- To explore how PHC-RNs in Ontario address barriers and support healthcare access among recent immigrants.

Methods

- Design:** Qualitative, interpretive descriptive
- Sampling:**
 - RNs practising in various PHC settings.
 - Purposeful sampling was used to recruit PHC-RNs practising in the top five urban centres where the majority of recent immigrants live in Ontario, including Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo, Toronto, Ottawa-Gatineau, Hamilton, and London.
- Theoretical Framework:** Levesque et al.'s (2013) *Conceptual Framework of Access to Health Care* informed data collection and analysis.
- Data collection:** One-to-one, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data between April to August 2023.
- Data analysis:** Concurrent, constant comparative analysis.

Conceptual Framework of Access to Health Care



(Adapted from Levesque et al., 2013)

Findings

Ten PHC-RNS practising in Toronto (n=4), Ottawa-Gatineau (n=2), Hamilton (n=1), Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo (n=2), and London (n=1) participated. RNs practised in various PHC settings, including Family Health Teams (n=5), Community Health Centres (n=4), and a Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic (n=1).

Preliminary findings show that PHC-RNs play instrumental roles in supporting recent immigrants in accessing health care. For example, PHC-RNs:

Appropriateness: Holistically assessed patient needs and connected them to appropriate health and/or social resources.

Acceptability: Assessed and acknowledged differences in cultural or social belief systems.

Affordability: Coordinated affordable health service options within or beyond the PHC setting.

Ability to Perceive: Delivered education on the importance of receiving primary health care (e.g., immunizations, preventative screening, chronic disease management).

Ability to Seek: Provided education on utilizing complementary and therapeutic services (e.g., pharmacy, bloodwork, imaging).

Ability to Engage

- Tailored and utilized strategies to address language barriers and promote health literacy levels; and
- Translated health information into accessible language to promote health literacy.

The PHC-RN role could be optimized by:

- Conducting needs assessments for immigrants and connecting them to appropriate health services post-arrival;
- Delivering outreach preventative care in local communities; or
- Expanding nursing scope or implementing medical directives.

Conclusion

- PHC-RNs are key facilitators of healthcare access for recent immigrants by coordinating their care, educating, and connecting this population to services across the health system.
- There are opportunities to optimize nursing roles to promote the health of immigrants.

References

Levesque, J.-F., Harris, M. F., & Russell, G. (2013). Patient-centred access to health care: Conceptualising access at the interface of health systems and populations. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 12(1), 18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-9276-12-18>

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