

## Abstract Form

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**Title of abstract:** "I learnt to do the test and not ignore it": Improving bowel screening knowledge of refugees

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**Background:** In 2016, 5375 people died from bowel cancer in Australia. Bowel screening requires adequate levels of health literacy and specific self-directed action. For many refugees who are not proficient in English, understanding how to carry out the bowel screening test could prove extremely difficult.

**Aims:** The NSW Refugee Health Service's *Be Bowel Cancer Smart* project aimed to assess existing knowledge of bowel cancer and self-reported bowel screening rates amongst Arabic-speaking refugees in south western Sydney aged 45 to 75. It was expected that the rate of screening would be lower than the Australian average. It also examined willingness to participate in bowel cancer screening after an intervention to improve knowledge of bowel cancer and bowel screening.

**Method:** The *Be Bowel Cancer Smart* project used the Arabic Bowel Screening Flip Chart developed by the Cancer Institute to deliver six education sessions to existing support groups for Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Fairfield and Liverpool. In the six sessions, a survey was conducted to investigate participants' knowledge of bowel cancer and experience with screening. After the intervention, a questionnaire was used to identify participants' key learnings, perceived usefulness of information received and intention to undertake the test in future. Thematic analysis was used to analyse responses to open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

**Results:** Pre-intervention of 107 participants, 73% and 62% had heard of bowel cancer and of bowel screening, respectively. Forty-three per cent (43%) reported performing the test. The most important learnings cited were the importance of bowel screening and how to do it. Ninety-three per cent (93%) stated they would complete the screening in future.

**Implications that impact on your project:** The in-language community-based sessions demonstrated increased understanding of why bowel screening is important and how to perform bowel screening amongst Arabic-speaking refugees. Further research is needed to explore if increased knowledge leads to increased uptake of bowel screening and reasons for relatively high screening rates.