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## ABSTRACT

During resettlement, refugees often arrive with pre-existing health problems and are immediately faced with learning an unknown medical system. An important approach to self treatment is the use of over the counter medications. The broad range of therapies and large amount of OTCs can contribute to the many challenges refugees face. Since Louisville refugees hail from an array of countries, there is not one shared culture or language among them. Therefore, a standard educational tool to over the counter medications needs to be developed to be later translated across many languages.

## INTRODUCTION

Approximately 70,000 refugees are expected to enter the US during 2014 as part of resettlement efforts<sup>1</sup>. Due to the variety of countries from which refugees arrive, there is not one shared culture or language. **(Image 1)** Additionally, each of these individuals come with existing healthcare issues that must be addressed in a new environment.

The little that has been written concerning the over the counter medication use among refugees recognizes a lack of knowledge regarding selection and safe use<sup>2</sup>. Provision of information that may help with selection and safe use is currently lacking.

Although over-the-counter medication may not be appropriate for all health issues, there are common medications for adult, adolescent, and children that may be of use to the refugees. Providing information that helps guide decision-making and reduces opportunities for incorrect or unsafe use of over the counter medication by refugees is an area deserving of attention.



**Image 1.** Countries of Origin of Refugees Currently Resettling in Louisville

## OBJECTIVE

The goal of this project is to create a 'gold standard' guide and informational tool for over the counter medications that can be later translated and distributed to the local refugee population.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

From a survey of refugees during 2013, a list of common ailments was gathered. Local medical doctors well known in the refugee community were interviewed. Presentations formed last year were attended to find which ailments prevail and to get to know the audience for construction of the booklet. **(Image 2)** Examples of medication were provided to facilitate interaction. **(Image 3)** The ailments include: pain and fever, seasonal allergies, constipation, diarrhea and vomiting, and gastritis. An additional page was included to talk about children's medications. A review of the literature was completed, however there was a great lack of information on the topic.

To create the booklet, a common and consistent layout was formed for each medication to be included. Each page contained the common ailment as the title, common symptoms of ailment, available drugs for treatment listed by active ingredient with photos, warnings of use, and finally, alternative treatments.

Several informational and preventive pages were implemented as well; including a how to read your medication package page, brand names versus generic medications, maintaining health and wellness pages, oral hygiene and preventive health with overview of nutrition, general hygiene and vitamins. At the end of the booklet is a compendium of local resources such as local clinics, doctors that work with refugees specifically, places to buy over the counter medications and community centers that teach English as a second language. Additionally, health literacy was taken into account to further guide the creation of the booklet.



**Image 2.** Education Session for One Refugee Group

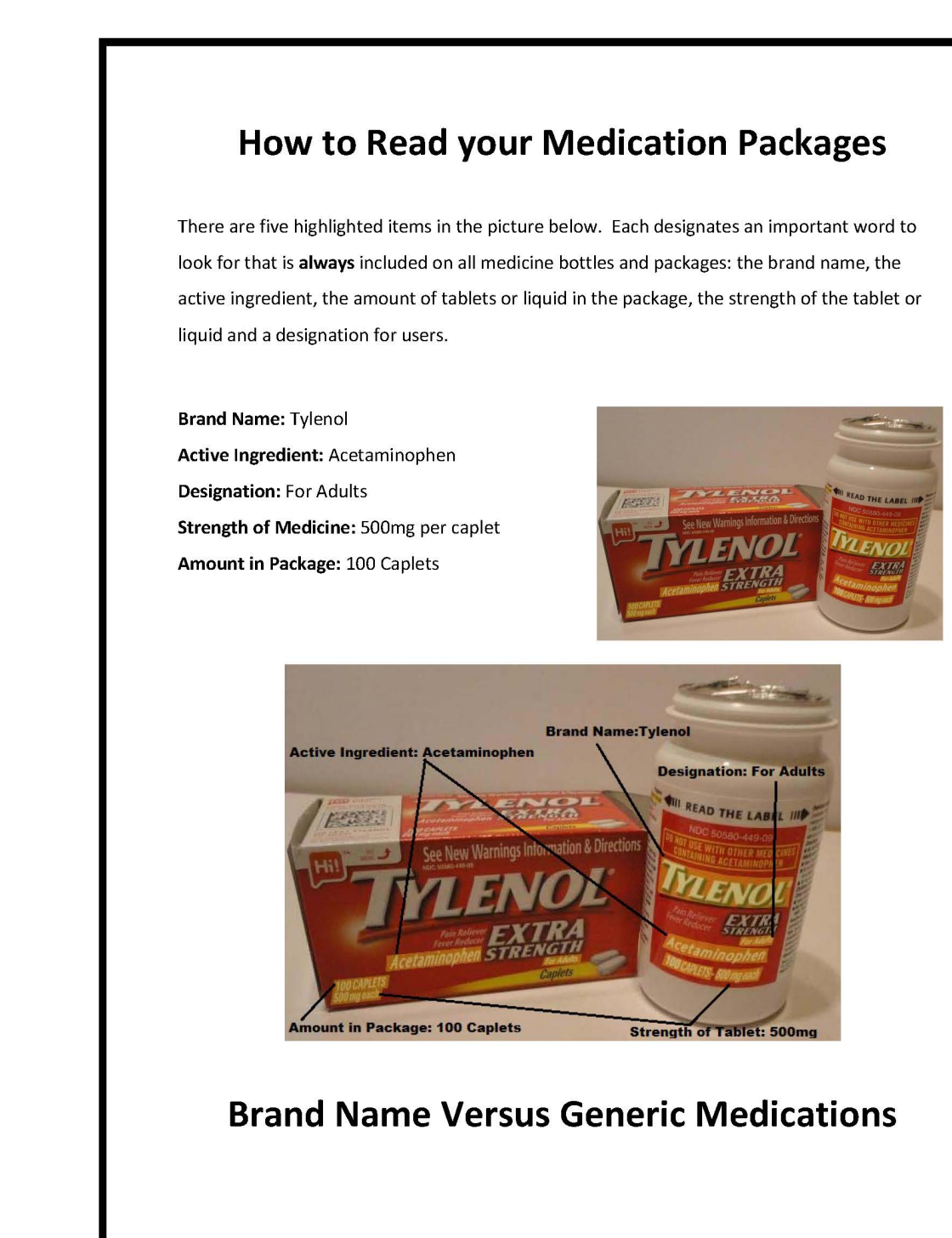
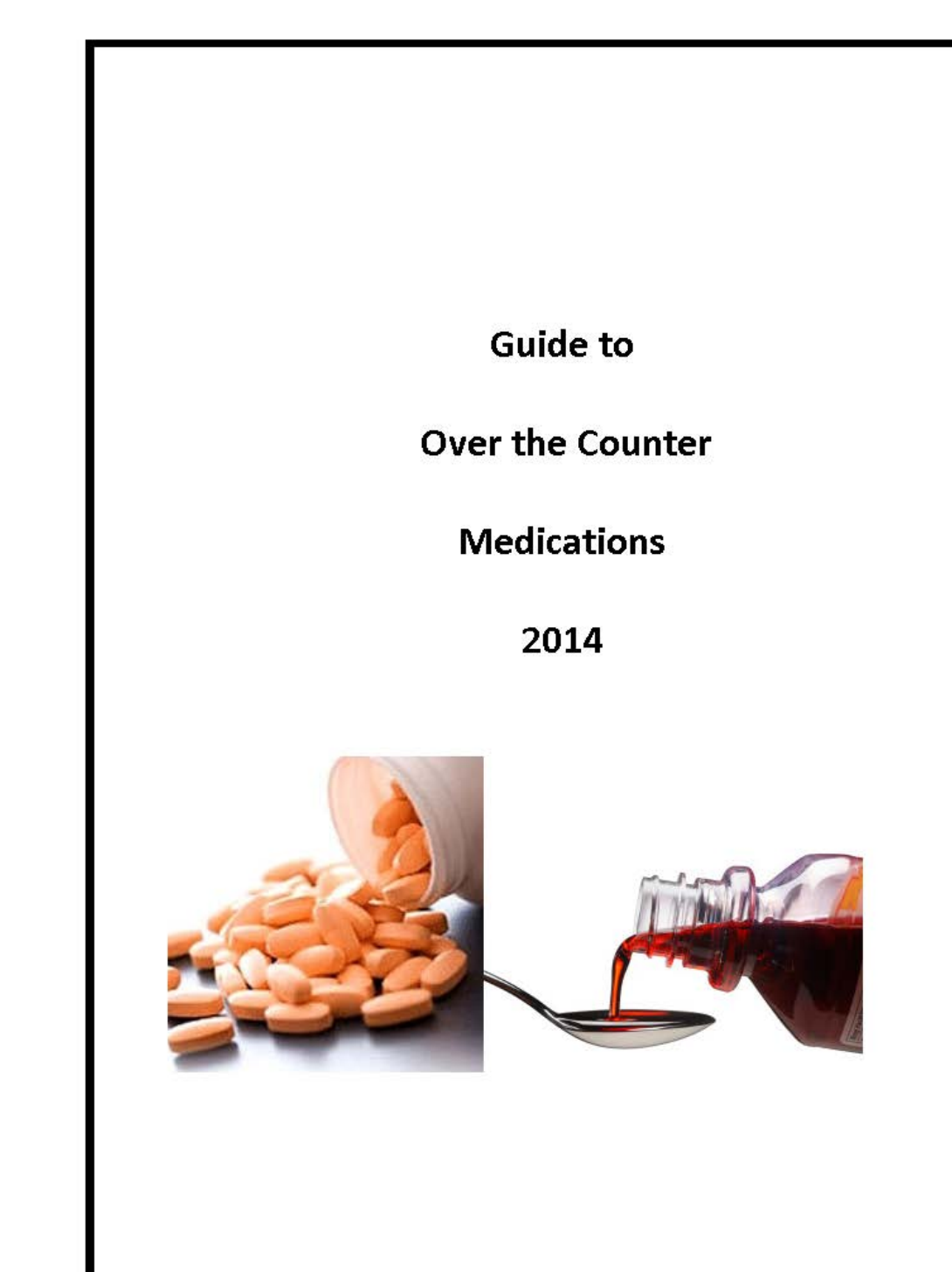


**Image 3.** Medication Examples

## RESULTS

A Guide to Over the Counter Medications' was created. The guide answers many questions one may have about medication such as: where to obtain medicine, how to administer it, safety, availability for children, and alternative treatments. Feedback from previous medication presentations contributed to how written educational material could be improved and refined. **(Images 4 and 5)** The printed material now contains pictures of the products, instructions for administration and use, non-pharmaceutical alternatives, and health conditions may warrant contact with a healthcare provider or emergency services.

During the creation of the 'Guide to Over the Counter Medications,' it was found that there are few compendia like it. Although we are now a technologically advanced culture and almost any information can be found on the internet, there is not an accessible resource for everyone in the community.



**Images 4 and 5.** Over the Counter Medication Booklet Contents

## CONCLUSIONS

Development of a guide for over the counter medication use for adult, adolescent and pediatric refugees has enabled self-care that is safe and useable.

The guide has been formatted to facilitate translation and printing into other languages and as a basis for multimedia dissemination with addition of audible translation. Furthermore, the guide can be edited for local community use.

A possible improvement to the guide would be to create a women's edition for women's health in order to reduce unintended consequences when dealing with cultural differences among genders.

## REFERENCES

1. Department of State. Refugee Admission Reports. 2014. Available at <http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/AdmissionsArrivals/tabid/211/Default.aspx>
2. Parmentier H, Golding S, Ashworth M, Rowlands G. Community pharmacy treatment of minor ailments in refugees. J Clin Pharm Ther, 2004. Oct, 29(5):465-469.