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BC RESEARCHERS STUDYING IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE CHILDREN FOR HEALTH IMPACTS RELATED TO LIFE EXPERIENCE & STRESS

Vancouver – Every year 55,000 children under the age of 15 settle in Canada as immigrants or refugees. While many benefit from strong family support some have experienced trauma before coming to Canada and others may face health and social problems once they arrive.

Researchers in Vancouver are part of a national study aimed at understanding the link between the stresses of migration and the health status of immigrant and refugee children. The New Canadian Children & Youth Study (NCCYS) involves interviewing over 4,000 families in six cities across the country.

Dr. Robert Armstrong, Chief, Pediatric Medicine at Children's and Women's Health Centre of BC is one of the study leaders in Vancouver. "At this time we know very little about the health needs of immigrant and refugee children," says Dr. Armstrong. "We want to examine whether the region or city a child settles in has an impact on their development. Are there specific psychosocial developmental issues for children in this group? How does their health and well-being compare with other Canadian children? How does being an immigrant or refugee child affect the evolution of personal identity? What is the impact of visible minority status on a child's integration and mental health?"

"This is a long-term study," says Dr. Armstrong who is also Associate Professor and Head, Department of Pediatrics at UBC. "The results will be used to improve Canada's resettlement policy and to help develop a truly inclusive National Children's Agenda—one that represents children from all experiences and backgrounds. Our research will also provide information that will be of use to educators and health care professionals."

In the Vancouver area the project is following 6 different ethno-cultural communities through two important transitions: the first (ages 4-6) from the family and the second (ages 11 to 13) from childhood to adolescence. Questionnaires have been translated and bilingual interviewers will be speaking with families from Iran, Afghanistan, the Philippines, India (the Punjab), Hong Kong and Mainland China. Study organizers are looking for more families to participate in each of these communities.

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News Release

