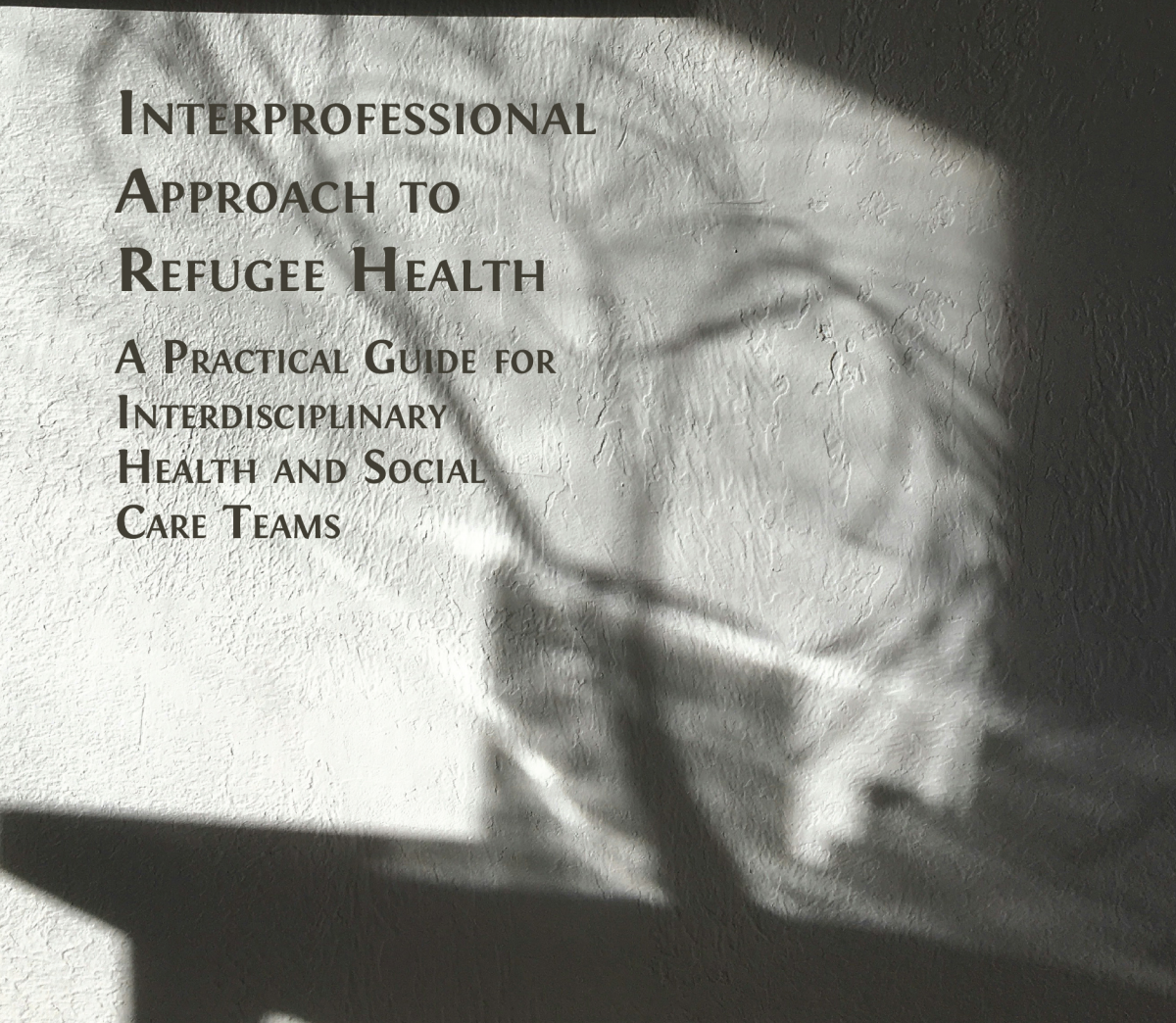


EDITED BY  
EMER MCGOWAN,  
DJENANA JALOVICIC  
AND SARAH QUINN



**INTERPROFESSIONAL  
APPROACH TO  
REFUGEE HEALTH**

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR  
INTERDISCIPLINARY  
HEALTH AND SOCIAL  
CARE TEAMS**



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# Foreword

*Aisling Hearn*

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As a mental health professional who has spent most of my career working with refugees—many of whom have endured unimaginable suffering before finding refuge in Ireland—I have witnessed first-hand the profound and lasting impact of displacement. These experiences have deeply influenced my approach to providing care, emphasizing the need for a compassionate, holistic, and culturally sensitive approach. This holistic model of care was a key finding in my doctoral research, which focused on working with torture survivors seeking international protection in Ireland. I found that providing certainty, a sense of control, and empowerment in healthcare settings is essential for facilitating healing.

Understanding the global context in which refugees live is crucial to delivering effective care. Section 1 of this book provides an essential overview of global migrations, the reasons behind forced migration, and the impact these experiences have on health. This broader context is critical for health professionals who seek to offer care that is both informed and empathetic, recognizing the complex realities that refugees face.

One of the most important lessons I have learned is the value of creating a therapeutic space where refugees feel safe, respected, and heard. Many individuals I have worked with carry deep emotional and psychological scars from their experiences of war, torture, and persecution. Section 2 delves into how healthcare professionals can provide person-centred care by creating such therapeutic environments. Building trust is key, and this often means taking the time to listen to

experiences, active involvement in care, and addressing not just physical symptoms but the whole person.

Interprofessional collaboration is another cornerstone of effective refugee healthcare. The complex needs of this population require the coordinated efforts of various professionals. In my practice, I have seen how integrated teamwork can significantly enhance the care provided to refugees. Section 3 explores the importance of professional identity, critical reflection and effective collaboration between professionals in ensuring that refugees receive comprehensive, high-quality care.

Cultural competence is an ongoing process of learning and reflection, rather than a skill to be simply acquired. Refugees come from diverse backgrounds, with unique beliefs, values, and practices that influence their perceptions of illness and healthcare. Section 4 emphasizes the need for healthcare providers to develop a deep understanding of these cultural dimensions. In my experience, the most effective care comes from professionals who approach their work with humility and a willingness to learn from the people they serve.

Finally, I have been deeply inspired by the resilience and strength of the refugees I have worked with. Despite immense suffering, many find ways to rebuild their lives, regain their sense of purpose, and contribute to their new communities. Providing opportunities for social connections, empowerment, and meaningful engagement is crucial to this healing process. Section 5 discusses the social and occupational determinants of mental health, highlighting how these factors can support refugees in regaining control over their lives and finding a sense of belonging.

Throughout my career, I have been continually inspired by the stories of survival, resilience, and hope shared by those I have been fortunate enough to have worked with. This book offers a comprehensive guide to improving refugee healthcare, drawing on both practical strategies and personal narratives. *Interprofessional Approach to Refugee Health* is a call to action for healthcare professionals to deepen their understanding, enhance their skills, and approach their work with empathy and respect. By doing so, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of refugees, helping them to heal, rebuild, and thrive in their new communities.