

News Release

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Meeting the Health Needs of Refugees and Asylum Seekers Phoenix Zones Initiative President/CEO Dr. Hope Ferdowsian Addresses Faculty Development Educational Grand Rounds at Chicago Medical School

March 2, 2021 (Albuquerque, NM) – Dr. Hope Ferdowsian, president and CEO of Albuquerque based Phoenix Zones Initiative, was the guest speaker for the Faculty Development Educational Grand Rounds at Chicago Medical School (CMS). The program works to bring experts to CMS to talk to faculty about learning and teaching in medical education. During her virtual presentation, Dr. Ferdowsian spoke about the medical, psychiatric, and other health-related needs of refugees and asylum seekers. She identified the unique challenges they face on a day-to-day basis, and she proposed ways in which clinicians and other health professionals can help address these growing needs.

“Worldwide, in 2020, more than 80 million people were forced to flee their homes because of war, human rights abuses, and economically and environmentally dangerous conditions,” says Dr. Ferdowsian. “Health professionals, learners, and researchers can make a powerful difference in their lives. At the same time, as a society, we must also address the issues that lead to forced migration. A Just One Health approach, which would require public policies, institutions, and practices to become more socially, environmentally, and economically just, could help move us in the right direction. There are great opportunities to move the needle forward in states like New Mexico—and concrete examples of how to do so in thoughtful and inclusive ways.”

Dr. Ferdowsian pointed out how clinicians can provide trauma-informed medical and mental health care that is respectful, compassionate, and just. She said that there are many policy-related research questions which researchers can address, and she urged students, residents, faculty, and researchers to advocate for an evidence-based, trauma-informed immigration system.

She also discussed how clinicians can actively participate in objective forensic medical and psychiatric evaluations of asylum seekers, which can be used to document asylum seekers’ reports of torture so that they do not have to return to potentially deadly circumstances. “You could save a life—or many lives,” says Dr. Ferdowsian.

About Phoenix Zones Initiative

Phoenix Zones Initiative is a nonprofit organization on a mission to advance rights, health, and wellbeing. Led by physicians and a diverse cross-sectoral team, Phoenix Zones Initiative recognizes the inextricable links between the welfare of people, animals, and the planet in the struggle for social and environmental justice. Phoenix Zones Initiative focuses on robust structural change by advancing ethical norms, values, legal and economic frameworks, and public policy to improve the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalized individuals and populations. Its programs center on critical needs and the acute intersections between human, animal, and planetary wellbeing. Follow Phoenix Zones Initiative on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), and [Phoenix Zones Initiative](#).

About Dr. Hope Ferdowsian

Dr. Ferdowsian is president and CEO of Phoenix Zones Initiative and author of *Phoenix Zones: Where Strength Is Born and Resilience Lives*. Over two decades, as a double-board certified internal medicine and preventive medicine physician, she has cared for individuals who have experienced displacement and violence, while she has also worked on public policies to address structural inequities and human and animal abuse and exploitation. Dr. Ferdowsian's work across six continents has included collaboration with the Office of the Surgeon General of the United States and the development of medical, public health, and educational resources for nongovernmental organizations, national governments, and intergovernmental organizations. Dr. Ferdowsian was named a Humanitarian of the Year in the American College of Physicians in 2017. She is also an associate professor at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, a co-director of the Society for Asylum Medicine, and a medical expert for Physicians for Human Rights.

About Rosalind Franklin University

Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science is committed to serving humanity through the interprofessional education of health and biomedical professionals and the discovery of knowledge dedicated to improving wellness. Founded in Chicago in 1912, RFU embodies the spirit of inquiry and excellence modeled by its namesake Dr. Rosalind Franklin, whose Photo 51 was crucial to solving the structure of DNA. Recognized for its research in areas including neuroscience, brain-related diseases, inherited disorders, diabetes, obesity, and gait and balance, the university encompasses the Chicago Medical School, College of Health Professions, College of Pharmacy, Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine and the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Learn more at www.rosalindfranklin.edu.

Media Note: Dr. Ferdowsian is available for interviews via phone, Zoom or Skype. To schedule an interview or for further questions please contact Clark Curtis at 704.808.1959 or clark@phoenixzonesinitiative.org.

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