



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Medical Student Videos Take Aim at Canada's New Refugee Regime**

OTTAWA, April 12th 2013 – Over the past two months, medical students at schools across the country have been producing videos to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of Bill C-31 and cuts to Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP). Under [these changes](#), many refugees and refugee claimants lose preventive health coverage including life-saving medications, and only receive health care if their condition is of an "urgent and essential" nature. Perhaps even more worrying, refugee claimants from Designated Countries of Origin (DCOs), countries that are deemed to be "safe" by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, receive coverage only if their condition is a threat to public health and safety. A heart attack, a woman in labour, a broken arm - none of these medical issues will be covered for DCO claimants.

"As medical students, we're standing up to say that it is wrong to deny the human right to health to some of the most vulnerable people residing in Canada", said Benjamin Langer, National Officer for Human Rights and Peace for the Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS), "these are people fleeing horrible circumstances and they are being punished simply for being from a particular country."

In response, the CFMS launched a video competition, urging medical students across the country to put their energy, knowledge, and creativity to work to produce short advocacy videos that would inform and engage the public on this issue. They are hoping to help turn the tide in the struggle to restore basic health care to Canada's refugees and refugee claimants who

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are no longer fully covered by the IFHP. It is also a way for medical students to hone their advocacy skills, learning to stand in solidarity with those who suffer from poor access not just to health care services but to many of the social and economic factors that enable the pursuit of a healthy life. "The CFMS takes this role seriously and has continued to search for different venues to advocate for improved health for some of the most underserved people living on Canadian soil" said Kimberly Golding-Williams, who heads CFMS's Global Health Program. "We believe it is important that medical students learn how to be advocates while in school, so that they continue to advocate for change in the future."

Keith Johnstone, a CFMS representative at the University of Saskatchewan, spoke about the experience: "It's been very rewarding to see people go from knowing very little about the issue to being experts during the film-making process. I think the most challenging part was figuring out how to boil a complex issue such as refugee health into a short video. We are not limited to writing to our MP or the newspaper to get our opinions out to the public anymore. As future health advocates, we need to be creative in how we construct and deliver our advocacy messages."

You can watch the videos and vote for your favourite at <http://cfms.org/index.php/global-health/projects/immigrant-and-refugee-health.html?showall=&start=2>.

*The Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) is a national organization that represents over 7500 medical students at 14 medical schools across Canada.*

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