

Many Towns Seek Physician Refugees

By Judy Luce Mann
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A top medical officer in the Health, Education and Welfare Department said yesterday he has received dozens of requests from rural American communities for help in getting the services of an estimated 200 to 250 Vietnamese refugees who are physicians.

Dr. Edward Martin, director of the National Health Services Corps, said he received 24 calls within the first 36 hours after his unit was made the clearing house for requests for such physicians.

"There are over 400 communities that we've identified with a critical shortage of physicians," he said. He described these as "overwhelmingly small, rural than one primary care physician per 4,000 people.

Corps officials planned to have detailed information about the training and licensure situation of each of the Vietnamese physicians by Friday.

Martin said the refugee doctors will have to satisfy various licensing requirements and also be able to speak English "reasonably well," before they can begin practicing here. Out of the entire group of refugees, he estimated that no more than 100 may be able to begin practice soon.

Most doctors interviewed so far, Martin said, are specialists, rather than family doctors and many will proba-

bly go to medical institutions, he said. The small, rural community that needs the doctor "is usually the place that is the least logical place for specialists or physicians who have language problems."

In other related developments, a new committee was announced to assist Washington area residents who want to help Southeast Asia refugees and to aid refugees in finding sponsors.

The new group, the Washington Area Refugee Committee, is seeking offers of jobs, housing, financial aid and general refugee sponsorship and will seek to work with the State Department and voluntary agencies to match offers with appropriate refugee families now at camps in the U.S.

The committee is located at 1229 25th St. NW; its telephone is 462-6660.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Northern Virginia reported it has obtained a commitment from each of its 51 parishes to sponsor and assist a large, hard-to-place Vietnamese refugee family. It is receiving inquiries at this telephone: 979-4019.

Another group was formed yesterday to help Vietnamese refugee journalists and others who worked for American news organizations in Southwest Asia. It is called the Correspondents Committee for Refugee Relief.