PTSD in the Hmong Community

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Key points

History of Hmong people

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Demographic

How PTSD effects Hmong community

Shamanism

Western vs. Eastern treatments
  • Differences between modern Medications and eastern Herbs
Who are the Hmong’s

- Hmong people lived in China for over 2000 years before migrating further south. They generally came from the hills and mountains of China.

- According to genetic evidence, Most Hmong in the United States came from Laos, but there are many others from Thailand, Vietnam and China.

- Hmong people have their own language and uses different dialect such as
  - Hmong lees (Green) and Hmong dawb (White)
  - These two dialects have so many differences between them that they could be considered a completely separate language.
  - Hmong dawb is primary more used in today dialect. It is must easier to know and understand.
Most Hmong came over to the United States after the Secret War.

- Hmong were recruited by the C.I.A to act as spies.
- U.S pulled out of the war, new leader came to power in Laos.
- Persecuted for their anti-communist actions and fled to Thailand refugee camps.

Although there is not a single government out there that will acknowledge it, there are still many Hmong people in Laos who are being persecuted.

Late 1980s
- Lutheran church sponsored Hmong people to come to the United State.
Hmong Timeline

- **3000 B.C.** – Hmong was the earliest group in Eastern Asia, inhabiting the area north of the Yellow River in China.
- **1810** – Hmong people cross the borders of China into Northern Laos. This is a mountain area that allows for somewhat safe cover from the war that was going on.
- **1840** – The vast majority of Hmong migrated to Laos to avoid oppression.
- **1952** – A Hmong writing system is designed to finally put the Hmong Language on paper.
- **1957** – American Soldiers enter Laos to train the Hmong and fight against the communists.
- **1960** – The “Secret War” begins in Laos as Hmong people are beginning to launch deadly guerrilla warfare.
CONTINUATION OF HMONG TIMELINE

- **1975** - A significant year in Hmong history - Americans are completely withdrawn from Laos and the massacring of Hmong people begins immediately. Hmong Army officials including Vao Pang are airlifted to Thailand. Hmong families are forced to attempt a life-threatening escape from Laos across the Mekong into the Thailand Refugee camps.

- **1976** - The first wave of Hmong immigrants begin to arrive in the United States.

- **1982** - Still being eradicated by the Royal Laos government in Laos and hungry in Thailand refugee camps, a second wave of migration into the U.S. begins and lasts over 4 years. The Lutheran church is very involved in the relocating process.

- **1991** - Thailand, Laos, and the United Nations sign an agreement that will move Hmong people from the refugee camps and back into Laos. Knowing they are still oppressed back in Laos, 10,000 flee to a Thai Buddhist temple to seek asylum.

- **2002** - Senator Mee Moua becomes the first Hmong senator.

- **2004** - Another larger group of Hmong people arrives in the United States. There is a steady flow every year in the area of 1000-5000 immigrants.

- **TODAY** - Many Hmong people have found their way back to Thai refugee camps as the Royal Lao Government continues to harass the Hmong Culture.
POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

History of PTSD

DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)

What is considered somewhat PTSD Symptom
WHAT IS POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

The risk of exposure to trauma has been a part of the human condition since we evolved as a species.

- Attacks by Saber Tooth Tigers
- Twenty-first century terrorists attacks

1980s

- American Psychiatric Association added PTSD to the third edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III)

DSM III

- Importance of Traumatic Events
  - Traumatic event was conceptualized as a catastrophic stressor that was outside the range of usual human experience
- The original PTSD diagnosis had in mind events were
  - War, torture, rape, the Nazi Holocaust, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Natural disasters (such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcano eruptions), and human-made disasters (such as factory explosions, airplane crashes, and automobile accidents).
The diagnostic criteria for PTSD are as follow:

- Directly experiences the traumatic event
- Witnesses the traumatic event in person
- Learns that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or close friend (with the actual or threatened death being either violent or accidental)
- Experiences first-hand repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event (not through media, pictures, television or movies unless work-related)

The disturbance, regardless of its trigger, causes clinically significant distress or impairment in the individual’s social interactions, capacity to work or other important areas of functioning. It is not the physiological result of another medical condition, medication, drugs or alcohol.
PTSD debate within the military

- Certain military dis-like the work “disorder”
  - They have urged a change to rename the disorder posttraumatic stress injury
  - A description that they say is more in line with the language of troops and would reduce stigma.
- Most soldiers who are experiencing PTSD are Reluctant to ask for help
The Age population trends in the United States for Hmong are quickly shifting:

- The Hmong population in the United States has increased by 40% since 2000 to 2010.
- Most notable is the exponential population increase of Hmong relocating to Alaska and Southern states (134% from 2000 to 2010).
- In comparison to both the general population and the Asian American population, Hmong Americans have the largest youth population (44% under the age of 18).
CURRENT ISSUES IN THE HMONG COMMUNITY

Poverty
Employment
Housing
Education
The decline in overall poverty in the Hmong population from 40% in 2000 to 25% in 2010 is a sign that many Hmong Americans are doing better relative to previous decades. However, income remains a significant issue for the community and today the Hmong remain one of the poorest ethnic groups in the U.S.
Differences in income are apparent depending on geographic region and gender.

Hmong females earn a median annual income $3,000 less than Hmong men.

Hmong men earn a median annual income almost $16,000 less than men in the U.S. in general.
EMPLOYMENT

• Hmong Americans’ heavy concentration in certain industries has affected multiple aspects of their lives

• 29% of Hmong workers are employed in manufacturing jobs.

• Due to the migration and the barriers of the Hmong’s, most of them are required job training at the federal, state, and local level include measures to build their skills to enter other industries.

• Back in the old days the Hmong’s mostly did farm work and that is the only work experience they received aside from the men’s who went to war.

• In 1990, the percentage of unemployed Hmong Minnesotans was 21.6 percent. By 2013, that had dropped to 8.2 percent.
Despite today’s record low interest rates, joblessness and credit problems prevent many Hmong American household heads from purchasing homes.

At the federal level, Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) data does not currently disaggregate for Asian American subgroups such as the Hmong. However like all Americans, Hmong Americans suffered high rates of foreclosure through the recent economic downturn.

For example, Hmong are concentrated in cities with nationally high foreclosure rates such as in Merced, California.
In 1990 only 12% of Hmong Americans 25 years old and over have obtained a high school diploma and 3% obtained a bachelor degree.

In 1990, the percentage of Minnesota’s Hmong with at least a bachelor’s degree was 5%. By 2013, that had risen to 21.3 percent.

- Language is a barrier to a lot of the population and the Hmong Community.
- Most Hmong Children were put into ESL (English as a Second Language) or ELL (English Language Learners).

Most Hmong parents are considered Alien Citizens. It is especially important to Hmong parents, that their children receive the education and opportunities that weren’t available to them.
HOW PTSD EFFECTS Hmong Community

• Back then:
  • Depression, anxiety, PTSD due to adjustment, language barriers, loss of status, refugee experience, war experience, & parent-child issues

• Today:
  • Depression, anxiety, PTSD due to domestic violence, divorce, increasing medical/physical health problems, homicide & suicide cases, & chemical dependency
Spiritual – Hope, purpose, peace

Physical – overall well-being, state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, note merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Mental – state of well being
Hmong conceptualization and treatment of “Trauma”

Trauma = poob plig or ceeb ntshai

Muscle tension

Body tension

Loss of soul

Xais ceeb

Nchos ceeb

Spiritual ritual/ceremony (shaman, soul calling healer hu plig, prayer)
SHAMANISM

• What is shamanism
• What tools are used
• What rituals are performed
WESTERN VS. EASTERN

**Western Treatment**
- Doctors
- Psychologist
- Prescription Drugs
  - Narcotics
  - Over the counter

**Eastern Treatment**
- Shamanism
- Ua Neeg
- Hu Plig
- Medication
- Herbs
- Asian medication
  - Not tested
First and Second Generation PTSD Experiences

**First Generation**
- Went through war
  - Struggles from grief and loss leaving home behind, family, social networks.
- Struggle with cultural differences
- Language barriers
- Everyday stress of trying to achieve the American dream in this country.

**Second Generation**
- Not as motivated
- Children have high risk for being depressed and anxious.
  - Those whose parents have been exposed to war.
Questions?
References


