

La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium

Hmong Culture
for Clinical Providers



Special thanks to...

- Gundersen Health System
- La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium (LMHSC)
- LMHSC Cultural Competency Committee

for their assistance in developing this cultural competency module

Disclaimer

Caution on Stereotyping

- The material in this program is generalized and is not intended to perpetuate stereotypes of diverse individuals or groups of people
- Cultural traits may vary based on individual preference and level of acculturation – someone may have physical attributes of a specific heritage, but it does not mean he/she practices the traits of that culture
- Bottom line: Never Assume, Always Ask!
 - ▶ Never assume that every member of any culture holds the same beliefs and ideals
 - ▶ Use this background information to ask culturally sensitive, informed questions

Traditional Medical Practices: Overview

- Disharmony within the body results in illness
 - Disharmony can be brought on by:
 - Eating wrong foods
 - Overworking
 - Excessive worry
 - Sadness
 - Old age
- Illness viewed as something that causes limitation to eat, drink, or get out of bed
 - Must be unable to perform necessary daily tasks to be classified as ill

Traditional Medical Practices: Who Administers Care?

- A shaman calls spirits for illness caused by soul loss and to assist with:
 - Survival of serious illness
 - Births
 - Funerals
- A shaman can be male or female
 - Male does the extreme spirit calling
- Shaman provides bridge between traditional and modern care
- The shaman within clan travels to homes for healing ceremonies
 - Shaman enters “trance” with shaking for up to 4 hours

Interaction 1 of 5

- Which of the following are believed to cause illness in Hmong culture?

(Select all that apply)

- Excessive worry
- Old Age
- Boredom
- Laziness

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Interaction 1 of 5 (Answer)

- Which of the following are believed to cause illness in Hmong culture?

(Select all that apply)

- Excessive worry
- Old Age
- Boredom
- Laziness

Traditional Medical Practices: Treatment/Procedures

- Treatments of physical symptoms include:
 - Herbal remedies
 - Massage
 - Dietary adjustments
- Herbs can be tied to wrists, ankles, or legs to relieve pain, gastro-intestinal problems, or to reduce fever
 - Home remedies often used first
 - Could result in progression of disease/illness

Traditional Medical Practices: Treatment/Procedures

- Illness may be spiritually or supernaturally induced
 - May be caused by soul loss or ancestral spirit
- Several methods are used to release evil spirits or illness causing toxins from body
- Some of these methods are:
 - Cupping
 - Coining
 - Pinching

Traditional Medical Practices: Treatment/Procedures

- Cupping
 - Cotton/tissue is burned in glass jar, after flame disappears, the jar is place over painful area until air cools. This results in a vacuum effect leaving a red mark where the jar was. Thought to draw out toxin.
- Coining
 - Using spoon/coin/anything with round edge, skin is stroked lightly until red oval appears. Results in irregular bruise.
- Pinching
 - Skin pinched until a narrow bruise appears, usually found between the eyes for cure of a headache.

Interaction 2 of 5

- Herbal remedies are a common treatment in traditional Hmong healing.
 - True
 - False

Caution on
Stereotyping

Interaction 2 of 5 (Answer)

- Herbal remedies are a common treatment in traditional Hmong healing.
 - True
 - False

Traditional Medical Practices: Pain Management

- Many Hmong traditionally used opium to treat pain, but will readily accept Western pain medications.
- Some Hmong patients may not follow dosage instructions and may...
 - Continue to take more than prescribed to relieve pain OR not take it at all in fear of toxic to the body
 - Not use it as prescribe due to the lack of understanding time (for elderly people).

Traditional Medical Practices: Views on Western Medicine

- Among patients often use both shamans & physicians
- Shamans used for spiritual illness:
 - Loss of spirit, night fright, unhappiness, stress.
 - Physicians used for physical illness such as:
 - Dizziness, high blood pressure, broken bones, intestinal problems
- Prevention methods may not be widely used
 - Health screening or well-baby checks uncommon
 - PAP smears gaining more acceptance

Traditional Medical Practices: Views on Western Medicine

- Generally invasive procedures are not well accepted (including having blood drawn)
 - Removing/changing parts of body could have negative health effects
- Traditional Hmong may not want to donate organs
 - One of body's three spirits stays with body, so body needs to remain intact
- Pregnancy care becoming more accepted
- Most Hmong women still very modest
 - Cesarean sections increased due to increase in baby size (better nutrition)

Tips for Western Medicine Practice

- Refrain from pressuring patients for a decision before they have had time to consult with others.
- Before making a decision, many Hmong like to get a second opinion, often from clan leaders, to be sure they are making the appropriate decision.

Interaction 3 of 5

- What is a main concern when prescribing pain medication to Hmong patients?

(Select all that apply)

- Patient's fear of addiction
- Patients lack of acceptance for Western medicine
- Patient's potential for not following dosage recommendations

Caution on
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Interaction 3 of 5 (Answer)

- What is a main concern when prescribing pain medication to Hmong patients?

(Select all that apply)

- Patient's fear of addiction
- Patients lack of acceptance for Western medicine
- Patient's potential for not following dosage recommendations

Biological Variation: Disease Trends

- Top 10 leading causes of death for Asian/Pacific Islanders:
 1. Malignant neoplasms
 2. Disease of the heart
 3. Cerebrovascular diseases
 4. Accidents
 5. Chronic lower respiratory diseases
 6. Influenza & pneumonia
 7. Diabetes mellitus
 8. Intentional self-harm
 9. Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome, and nephrosis
 10. Certain conditions originating in the perinatal period

(National Vital Statistics Report 50(16), Sept. 16, 2002)

5 Top Diseases in the Hmong Population

- Some of the most common cancers diagnosed in Hmong people are:
 - Stomach
 - Liver
 - Pancreas
 - Leukemia
 - Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma

Source: Hmonghealth.org

Preferred End of Life Care: Death and Dying

- Death is viewed as a natural part of the life cycle
- Use more passive words to describe death:
 - “Passing on”, “passed away”, etc.
- Family members, particularly clan leaders, may assume the role of decision maker
- Expect large amounts of visiting family throughout the day and night
 - All family members expected to visit the ill person
 - Family may travel from across the country

Preferred End of Life Care: Death and Dying

- Terminal illness is almost never communicated to the patient
 - Doing so might be viewed as wishing death upon the person, and may be blamed for bringing about their death
 - Always verify preference with the family
- Women are usually the primary caregivers of the terminally ill
- Dying at home may be preferred over the hospital
 - Ask for preference

Interaction 4 of 5

- The number one cause of death among Asians/Pacific Islanders is:

(Select only one answer)

- Malignant neoplasms
- Influenza & pneumonia
- Diseases of the heart

Caution on
Stereotyping

Interaction 4 of 5 (Answer)

- The number one cause of death among Asians/Pacific Islanders is:

(Select only one answer)

- Malignant neoplasms
- Influenza & pneumonia
- Diseases of the heart

Preferred End of Life Care: Death and Dying

- Expect spiritual amulets, bracelets and other healing tools
 - May tie string to bed frame and person's wrist or ankle to keep them from going to spirit world or preventing the bad spirit to find them
 - Always ask permission of elder family member before touching or moving any spiritual items
- Opportunity to dress the dying in traditional Hmong dress may be necessary
 - Nurses should offer to assist if this is desired

Preferred End of Life Care: Death and Dying

- Organ donation and autopsy uncommon among traditional Hmong
 - One spirit stays with the body in death, so body must remain whole
 - Christian Hmong may be supportive of these medical requests

Preferred End of Life Care: Grief and Loss

- Expect spiritual amulets, bracelets and other healing tools
 - May tie string to bed frame and person's wrist or ankle to keep them from going to spirit world or preventing the bad spirit to find them
 - Always ask permission of elder family member before touching or moving any spiritual items
- Opportunity to dress the dying in traditional Hmong dress may be necessary
 - Nurses should offer to assist if this is desired

Interaction 5 of 5

- How do Hmong view organ donation and autopsy?

(Select one)

- View it negatively
- Varies depending on religious affiliation
- View it as acceptable

Caution on
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Interaction 5 of 5 (Answer)

- How do Hmong view organ donation and autopsy?

(Select one)

- View it negatively
- **Varies depending on religious affiliation**
- View it as acceptable

Question 1 of 5: Identify the correct choice to complete each of the bulleted statements below:

- The traditional healer within Hmong culture is a:
- Hmong rarely tell a terminally ill patient of:
- Due to religious beliefs and spirituality, traditional Hmong individuals react negatively to:
- A traditional Hmong method of healing is:

Choices:

- a. Pinching
- b. Their impending death
- c. Invasive procedures, having blood drawn, and organ donation
- d. Shaman

**Caution on
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Question 1 of 5: Identify the correct choice to complete each of the bulleted statements below:
(Answers)

- The traditional healer within Hmong culture is a **shaman**.
- Hmong rarely tell a terminally ill patient of **their impending death**.
- Due to religious beliefs and spirituality, traditional Hmong individuals react negatively to **invasive procedures, having blood drawn, and organ donation**.
- A traditional Hmong method of healing is **pinching**.

Choices:

- a. Pinching
- b. Their impending death
- c. Invasive procedures, having blood drawn, and organ donation
- d. Shaman

Question 2 of 5

- All Hmong individuals refuse to use physicians and rely entirely on Shamans for healing.
 - True
 - False

**Caution on
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Question 2 of 5 (Answer)

- All Hmong individuals refuse to use physicians and rely entirely on Shamans for healing.
 - True
 - False

Question 3 of 5

- Hmong culture believes that illness can be caused by supernatural or spiritual elements.
 - True
 - False

**Caution on
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Question 3 of 5 (Answer)

- Hmong culture believes that illness can be caused by supernatural or spiritual elements.
 - True
 - False

Question 4 of 5

- It is important to initiate a discussion in private to determine whether or not to tell the patient of terminal illness and to discuss other sensitive issues regarding the upcoming death. Who should be included in this discussion?

(Select all that apply)

- Primary medical practitioner
- Clan leaders
- Immediate family members

**Caution on
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Question 4 of 5 (Answer)

- It is important to initiate a discussion in private to determine whether or not to tell the patient of terminal illness and to discuss other sensitive issues regarding the upcoming death. Who should be included in this discussion?

(Select all that apply)

- Primary medical practitioner
- Clan leaders
- Immediate family members

Question 5 of 5

- Emotional expressiveness should be expected with Hmong grieving.
 - True
 - False

**Caution on
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Question 5 of 5 (Answer)

- Emotional expressiveness should be expected with Hmong grieving.
 - True
 - False

La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium

We hope you had a good experience using this module.
If you have any comments or ideas you would like to
share about this module, or future modules, please
contact the LMHSC Cultural Competency Committee at:

hscinformation@westernnc.edu

Thank you!



La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium

For additional cultural competency resources,
please visit the link below:

[http://www.lacrosseconsortium.org/content/c/cultural
_competency_learning_modules](http://www.lacrosseconsortium.org/content/c/cultural_competency_learning_modules)

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