

Quick Reference Sheet for Hmong
-Caution on Stereotyping-

Background:

Originate from the country of Laos, located in southeastern Asia

Statistics:

Today there are more than 200,000 Hmong people in the U.S.

Largely concentrated in California, Minnesota and Wisconsin (about 4,000 in La Crosse)

Social Structure:

Hmong (rhymes with 'song') in U.S. are referred to as Hmong Americans

18 clans

Common family names for the La Crosse area are: Xiong, Lor, Vue, Lee, Her, Moua, Vang, Yang, Thao, Cha

Beliefs/Values:

High value on strong, extended families

Male family member is main decision maker

Shamanism is a form of practice in the Hmong culture. A shaman is able to connect and communicate between the spirit and physical worlds through negotiation or battle.

The Hmong's religion is "animist", which they believe in ancestral worship and reincarnation.

Shaman is one of the main ritual practiced by many Hmong families.

Displaying a smile and eye contact is a good thing, however some individuals may not look at you face to face

Prolonged eye contact between males and females may be considered flirtatious

Avoid shaking hands or hugging with the opposite sex

Traditional Medical Practices:

Disharmony within the body results in illness which can be brought on by eating wrong foods, overworking, excessive worry, sadness and old age

Illness viewed as something that causes limitation to eat, drink, or get out of bed

A shaman calls spirits for illness caused by soul loss and to assist with survival of serious illness, births and funerals

May not follow dosage instructions and take more than prescribed to relieve pain OR not take it at all in fear of toxic to the body

Generally invasive procedures are not well accepted (including having blood drawn)

Most women still very modest

Refrain from pressuring patients for a decision before they have had time to consult with others

Biological Variations – Disease Trends:

Some of the most common cancers diagnosed in Hmong people are:

Stomach

Liver

Pancreas

Leukemia

Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma

End of Life:

Death is viewed as a natural part of the life cycle

Use more passive words to describe death ("Passing on", "passed away", etc.)

Expect large amounts of visiting family throughout the day and night

Terminal illness is almost never communicated to the patient

Women are usually the primary caregivers of the terminally ill

Dying at home may be preferred over the hospital

Expect spiritual amulets, bracelets and other healing tools

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

Expect emotional expressiveness

Please see the following PowerPoints for further details:

Hmong – Clinical Provider

http://www.lacrosseconsortium.org/uploads/content_files/Hmong_CL_Provider_9_12.pdf

Hmong – General

http://www.lacrosseconsortium.org/uploads/content_files/Hmong_General_9_12.pdf