

Fellow Bio:

Project Description:

The Hmong are one of the newest groups of people to arrive and settle in the United States. Unlike most immigrant groups the Hmong currently living in the United States are refugees from the war torn country of Laos. The Hmong were one of America's few allies during the "Vietnam Conflict." Operating a secret CIA funded war in Laos the Hmong disrupted North Vietnamese supply lines into South Vietnam and also launched missions to rescue hundreds US pilots shot down over Vietnam and Laos. When America left Vietnam and communist forces took over South Vietnam and subsequently Laos the Hmong people faced a campaign of ethnic genocide as evidenced by words written in the newspapers of the new Lao government, "It is necessary to extirpate, down to the root, the 'Hmong minority.'" After the war more than 40,000 Hmong fled to Thailand and eventually to the US. Currently the Hmong make up about 1% of this the US population. Due to the family structure and culture of Hmong society these people did not disperse equally across the nation, but rather settled in concentrated numbers in California, Minnesota, Wisconsin and a few other states.

Problems and conflict arose when the Hmong newcomers settle in large numbers in communities unprepared to handle the influx of refugees. The health systems of many communities have been strained in the past when trying to provide health to the Hmong who have a culture different from mainstream US society. An example of the clash of cultures is Anne Faidman's book When the Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down which chronicles the tension between the US medical system and a Hmong patient along with her family.

To improve the health of the Hmong it is critical for communication and understanding between western healthcare providers and Hmong patients to become improved. Doctors working in areas with large Hmong populations must learn about their Hmong patients and practice cultural humility when dealing with the Hmong. Furthermore the Hmong, especially the elders, must be approached and public health programs must be initiated to teach the Hmong about the western medical model. The purpose of this project shall be to facilitate communication and cooperation between the Hmong community and health care providers.

Project Goals:

1. To assist in the investigation into the overall health status of the Hmong in Wisconsin/the US.
  - a. To determine differences between the Hmong population and the general population in terms of community health needs, disease prevalence, health care usage, and health care access.
  - b. To determine epidemiologic data specific to the Hmong population
  - c. To assess the health needs of the Hmong population in the various communities of Wisconsin/the US
2. To develop effective methods to provide health screening and information to the Hmong population
3. To teach the students of the University of Wisconsin – Madison's School of Medicine and Public Health, Pharmacy School, Nursing School and Graduate Schools about Hmong health issues through a session of the class Health Care in Diverse Communities

4. To aid in the creation of a networked database providing health information to the Hmong and information about Hmong patients to healthcare providers

Accomplishments:

1. UW Population Health Research into the Hmong (Gabrielle Detjen)
  - a. I am currently working with Gabrielle Detjen in her population health research on the Hmong
  - b. I have attended and plan to attend Hmong health focus groups within the Madison area to determine health concerns of the Hmong community
2. Hmong Health Education Network (Peg Allen, Blong Yang, Peter Yang)
  - a. I am working with Peg Allen and the Hmong Health Education Network to edit and update the website Hmonghealth.org
  - b. I'm currently using my knowledge of anatomy to edit the "Health Illustrations" portion of the website.
3. Red Cross Health Screening of Wausau Elderly group (Jan Beringer)
  - a. Jan is a Red Cross Nurse working to screen an elderly group of about 30 residents of Wausau for hypertension and diabetes
  - b. I work with her to assist in her collection, and also provide health information to the elders about hypertension and diabetes

Challenges and Solutions:

1. One of the main challenges in working with the Hmong population especially in Wisconsin is the small size of the population. The Hmong make up approximately 33,000 of the residents of Wisconsin. To some, such as officials in the government and persons in control of grant money this population is too small to justify funding. Many health officials working to improve Hmong health must do so with volunteer time or devote part of their time from their main occupation. Solutions to the problem could be to increase awareness for Hmong health or recruit more volunteers and interested individuals to work with Hmong health issues.
2. There have been few studies done on the Health of the Hmong. There is a lack of literature about Hmong health issues as well as a lack of data on the Hmong population.

Next Steps:

Locus Project Objectives and Key Tasks	Target Date for Completion
Prepare and present several more health presentations to the elderly group in Wausau	Sept 2007- May 2010
Meet with other student moderators of the course Healthcare in Diverse Communities and help develop the Hmong section of the course	Jan 2008
Finish Editing of Health Illustrations	May 2008
Student Moderate the Hmong section of the HCDC course as well as other sections	May 2008
Continue work with the UW School of Pop. Health research project	May 2010

Resources Needed:

Last Updated: August 14, 2007