

Two Cultural Worlds: Training Hmong Shamans and Western Doctors



Merced, California

Marilyn Mochel, RN

Palee Moua

Tim Livermore, MD, MPH

History





- During the Vietnam War, Hmong fought for the US Central Intelligence Agency against the Communists
- Approximately 40,000 Hmong recruited by CIA from 1966-1974

Secret War in Laos

- 2,000,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Laos between 1964-1975
- 90% of Hmong villages were affected - suffered deaths or displacement
- Over 140,000 fled to refugee camps in Thailand

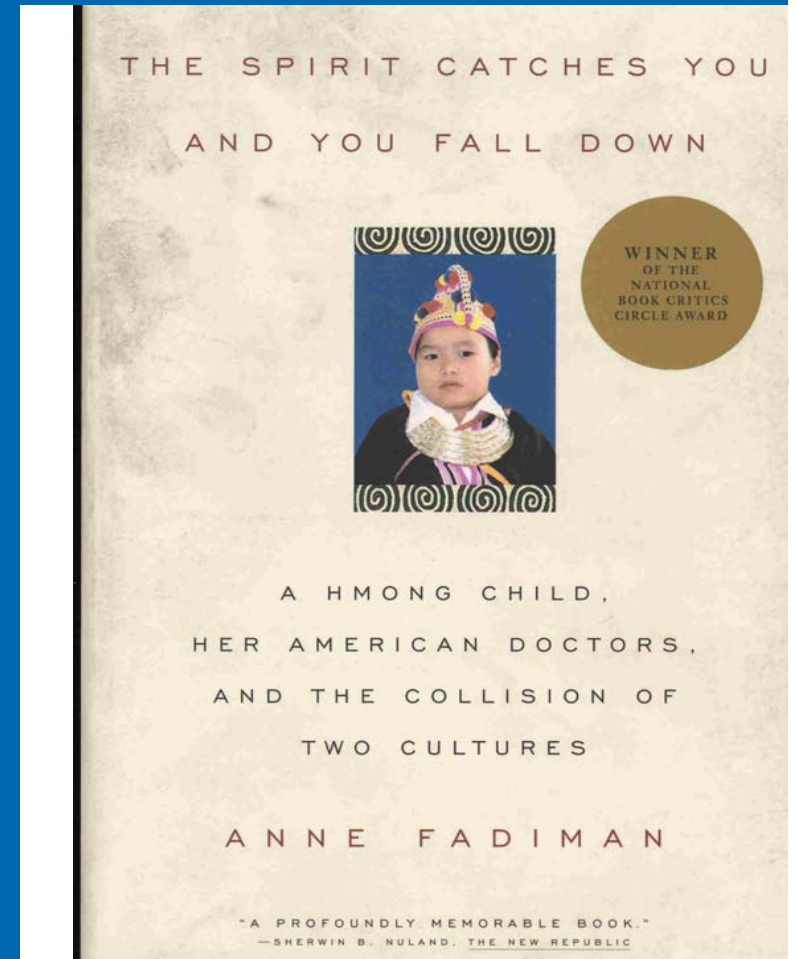


Presentation Objectives

- Describe the components of the training program involving Hmong Shamans and health care providers
- List barriers to providing quality health care to Hmong refugees

Responding to Hmong Community Need

- Distrust of health care providers and system of care
- Conflicts regarding surgery
- Increase in chronic illnesses and health disparities



Hmong Shamans



According to Hmong cosmology, the human body is the host for an ensemble of life-souls. A human body is healthy when all the life-souls are centered in the body...

Dwight Conquergood

Shamanism

A Hmong shaman can be both a diagnostician and a healer.

A Hmong shaman will determine the cause of illness and identify appropriate remedies.

Causes of illness include soul loss or illness caused by an ancestral spirit

Importance of Spiritual Healing

Survey Question: How often does your family request healing ceremonies?

- 1-5 times per year - 71%
- More than 5 times per year - 27%
- Never - 2%

Reasons for Shaman Intervention

- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Sadness
- Vivid dreaming
- Sudden pain
- Fainting
- Unexplained illness
- Change in personality

Partners in Healing Staff



Orientation

Shamans and healthcare providers are teachers and learners.



Shamans learn during
40 hour training



Healthcare providers learn
in community

Accomplishments

- 📄 Oriented 89 Hmong shamans
- 📄 Provided training to >300 medical providers (physicians, nurses, clinicians, allied health providers)
- 📄 Over 2,500 shaman interventions documented
- 📄 85 different types of ceremonies and rituals identified







Linking Physicians to Hmong Community





Shaman Ceremony





Twj neeb (shaman's instruments)



Used for:

- protection
- inspiration
- empowerment

Complementary Roles

- The doctor checks on body systems
 - Clinical cure is not complete if the patient does not feel cured.
- The shaman checks on souls
 - The shaman helps the patient to feel cured.

Outcomes

- Project has decreased fear about Western medicine
- Project has increased understanding on both sides and decreased conflicts
- Project has demonstrated how spiritual beliefs can be incorporated into clinical care



Today

Shamans

- refer people to doctors
- are respected like clergy in hospitals
- want to learn how to prevent diabetes/strokes

Physicians and Clinicians:

- understand Hmong traditional healing practices
- refer to shamans

Developing Partnerships



The project, *Partners in Healing*, gives the shaman social acceptance, motivates healthcare providers to learn and respect Hmong culture, and supports the social, spiritual and physical health of the Hmong community in Merced.

Maribel Valencia Castillo