CULTUREGRAM

Vietnamese

Disclaimer:

While information about a specific culture can aid understanding of a patient, it is important to understand that a patient from a particular culture will not necessarily have the same beliefs or traditions associated with that culture. Each patient is unique, and there are many factors that alter a person's cultural identity, including socioeconomic status, education, age, religion, gender, and lifestyle.

– Cultural Competency for Healthcare Providers, Champlain Valley AHEC, 2011

Country of Origin/Migration: Vietnamese fearing persecution first began migrating to the U.S. en masse during the 1970's as a result of the Vietnam conflict. There have been multiple significant waves of refugees since then, mostly tapering in the early 1990's, and these waves have included people of widely varying cultural background.

Language: Major languages include Vietnamese, English, French, Chinese, and Khmer.

Education/Literacy: Education and literacy may be quite variable. Fluency in English is common among those who had access to education, and literacy is less common among those who lived in rural settings as farmers.

Religion: There is a substantial amount of religious diversity among the Vietnamese, with Confucianism often underlying many traditions shared among religions. Prominent religions include Buddhism, Taoism, and Catholicism.

Medical Practices and Beliefs: There are a wide variety of traditional health practices among refugees from Vietnam. Complementary Chinese medical practices are often incorporated. Some examples include the use of supplements, moxibustion, and the generation of cutaneous hematomas by cupping. Mental illness can be perceived as particularly shameful, and one suggestion is for practitioners to use the phrase *behavioral health* rather than *mental illness*. Perspectives on alleviation of suffering, illness etiology, risk of invasive procedures, and open communication with practitioners may be worth clarifying. Perceived decision-making authority for medical care may not rest with the patient as is typical in the US.

Special Considerations: Hepatitis B and associated liver cancer and cervical cancer have historically been significant health disparities experienced by Vietnamese Americans. For a list of medical conditions endemic to Vietnam please see http://www.who.int/countries/vnm/en/.

**** The best source of information about the patient's experiences and culture is the patient him or herself.**

References:

http://ethnomed.org/culture/vietnamese/vietnamese-cultural-profile
http://www.cvahec.org/documents/FinalDraft6.0_4.18.12.pdf