Talking About PTSD: Improving Communication and Care for Refugee Patients

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Since 1975, more than 3 million refugees have resettled in the United States and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects nearly 1 in 10 of them in high- and middle-income nations. When parents cannot access effective PTSD treatment, it can have profound negative impacts on their child's behavior and development. We know that kids do better when their parents do better. And as the COVID-19 pandemic heightens stress and highlights inequities in health care for racial/ethnic minority communities, it's essential that we take the necessary steps to improve the health of refugee caregivers.

In this webinar, mental health experts, medical interpreters, refugee community leaders, and refugee health care providers discuss the challenges of communicating mental health treatment options across language and cultural differences and how new resources can help foster better communication between clinicians, professional medical interpreters and refugee patients. By strengthening providers' knowledge of PTSD treatment for refugees, providing tools for clinicians and interpreters, and advocating for evidence-based PTSD treatment for refugee adults, our hope is that all refugees will have the opportunity to live a healthy life not only for themselves, but also for their children.

This discussion is informed by a summary of practice recommendations for clinicians that is based on a comprehensive systematic review of PTSD treatment evidence from Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), as well as guidance from professional medical interpreters and other key informants from Arabic, Karen, Nepali and Swahili-speaking refugee/immigrant communities.

You can learn more about this work and find the glossaries discussed during the webinar here.

Panelists included:

- Ashok Gurung, MS, research assistant at PolicyLab at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) instructor, co-founder of Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh
- Linda McWhorter, PhD, assistant professor, licensed psychologist, Institute for Graduate Clinical Psychology Widener University,
- Priscilla Ortiz, PhD, CMI, language services program manager at CHOP, certified medical interpreter
- Patricia Stubber, PhD, chief executive officer of Multicultural Health Evaluation & Delivery System (MHEDS)
- Katherine Yun, MD, MHS, faculty lead for the Health Equity Portfolio at PolicyLab at CHOP, assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, attending physician in both the Division of General Pediatrics and the Refugee Health Program at CHOP (moderator)

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