

Are Asian Americans Ahead of the Mental Health System?

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Generalize
about Asia
at Your
Own Risk!

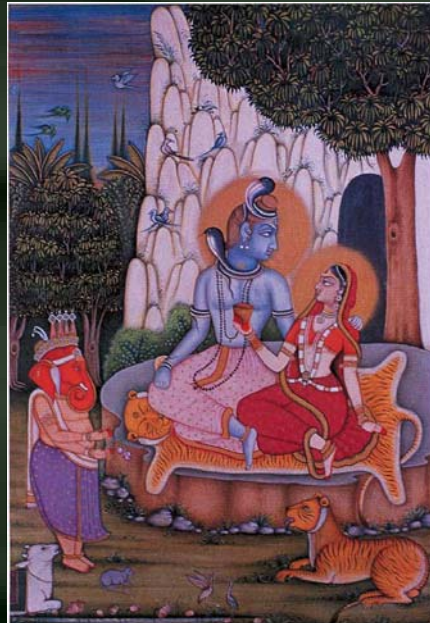
Are Asian-Americans different from other Americans?

- Different response to medications
 - More sensitive to EPS?
 - Less risk of Agranulocytosis?
 - Different average body weight
 - Different metabolism profiles in the liver
 - Results in lower dosing for:
 - Antidepressants
 - Antipsychotic medications
 - Valium (diazepam)
 - Nicotine
 - Results in different measure for side effect of weight gain due to antipsychotic medication

Are Asian-Americans different from other Americans?

Different developmental course

- “Enmeshed” Families?



Problem: “Asians don’t take advantage of Mental Health Services”

- Low utilization of outpatient services (Sue & Morishima 1982; Cheung 1980)
- Seeking help from the mental health system later when the disease is more severe (Lin & Lin 1978)
- For Schizophrenia, patients were contained within the family for 3 years after the onset of symptoms (Lin, Inui & Kleinman 1982)
 - Longer than Caucasians (1 year delay) and African-Americans (1.5 year delay)

Alternative View

- Better prognosis for schizophrenia in rural India than in developed countries (IPSS studies – W.H.O.)
 - Fewer relapses
 - Less time psychotic in the follow-up period
 - Possible Explanations:
 - Cohesive families
 - Less demanding environment
 - Lower degree of expressed emotion
 - Lower in rural India than in Denmark!
 - More accepting and caring families
 - NOT due to differences in diagnosis

Were we ahead of our time?

- The Koran dictates societal responsibility for the mentally ill
- Baghdad and the Muslim world maintain the first mental hospitals – at a time when the West viewed the mentally ill as possessed by evil
- Vijay Sagar (late 50's) – involvement of family members in the Amritsar Mental Hospital
 - Maintained connection with family when patient was hospitalized, fighting the myth of incurability
 - Group sessions for psychoeducation
 - Dramatic improvement in outcomes before the Era of Medication