

HEALTH LITERACY AND SELF-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF KAREN GOVERNMENT ASSISTED REFUGEES IN PRIMARY CARE

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RESEARCH PURPOSE

The study was conducted in order to examine the social and structural processes that shaped Karen Government Assisted Refugees (GARS) self-management and the factors that promoted health literacy in the context of accessing **primary health care services**



KEY CONCEPTS

❖ Self-management (SM)

- ❖ A health promotion intervention aimed to help address complex, social and economic impacts of chronic conditions for individuals and groups, optimize health and live well

❖ Health literacy (HL)

- ❖ the ability to access, understand, evaluate and communicate information as a way to promote, maintain and improve health in a variety of settings across the life-course

Mills, S (2013)

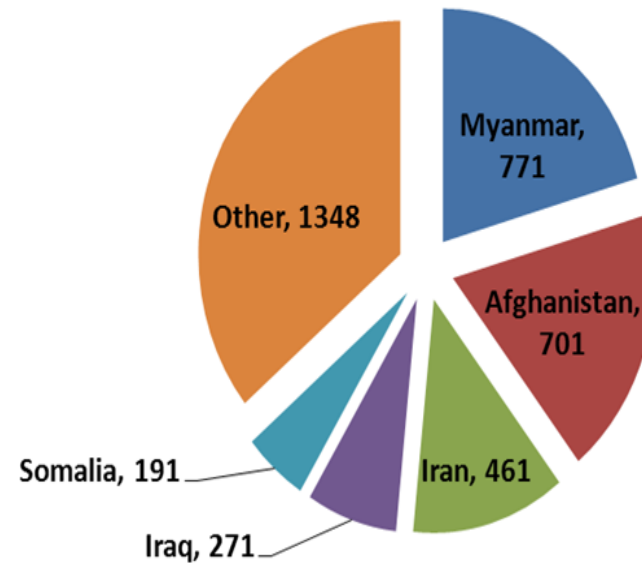
Rootman & Gordon-El Bihbety (2008)

BACKGROUND


FACTORS

- ❖ Karen refugee group
- ❖ Immigration Refugee Protection Act 2002
- ❖ Complex health and medical needs
- ❖ Low levels of literacy


**Government Assisted Refugees (GARs)
Total Metro Vancouver Arrivals
by Country of Origin, 2005-09**



WHAT WE KNOW

- ❖ Navigating the health system requires a functional skill set
 - ❖ Poorer health outcomes are associated with low literacy
 - ❖ Interpreters help support linguistic needs of diverse groups accessing health care services (in Canada these are offered in English and French primarily in Quebec)
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WHAT WE DON'T KNOW AND NEED TO KNOW

- ❖ What do Karen refugees view as relevant strategies for managing their health
 - ❖ What supports their [mental] health and well-being & access to primary health care services
 - ❖ What contextual factors intersect to challenge and or facilitate health literacy for the Karen
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RESETTLEMENT AND CONTEXT OF KAREN GARS



METHOD


Qualitative exploratory study with a convenience sample of 10 participants who accessed immigrant and refugee primary care clinic

Data was collected over a 3 month period from May to July 2013

Ethnographic field interviews conducted in participants homes



PARTICIPANT SAMPLE N=10

- ❖ \leq 5 years in Canada
 - ❖ Age range= 38-77 years
 - ❖ Average age= 60.1 years
 - ❖ Level of Education pre migration 0-6 years
 - ❖ Average years of Education 1.6
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RESULTS: WHAT DID WE FIND?

Pre migration context (History, culture)

Strategies for enhancing HL and SM where relationally based

Post migration social-environment and structural constraints



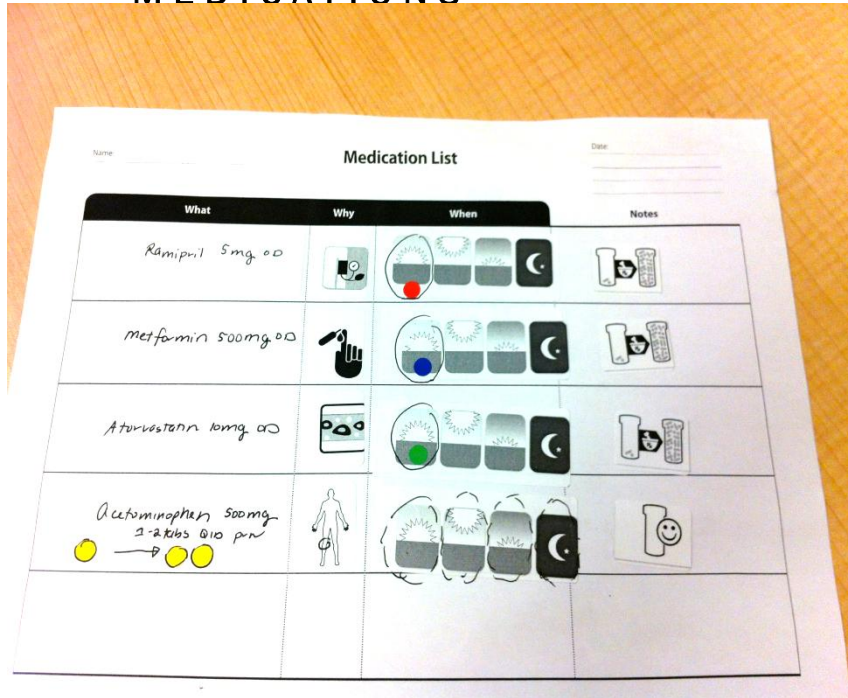
PRE MIGRATION CONTEXT (HISTORY, CULTURE)

- Yes. I used it but less than my own remedy, because I don't know much about medications here, I don't know what it's good for and what it's not good for, what the side effects that's going to come to me, because I don't understand. I don't read and then I don't have anyone to help me to explain what is that for. So I rarely use it. Instead of that I just use my own remedy, my home remedy, because I used to know it for so long, and I'm fluent in that, so I use more my home remedy instead of the medications here.

Mary 77 year old Karen woman

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING HEALTH LITERACY

MEDICATIONS



CALENDAR



I recommend it if any doctor that we go to see that can put the picture so that we can visualize and see it ...this helped me the most, that remind me how to take the medications and how to use it and things like that

Stuart 55 year old Karen man


HEALTH LITERACY AND SELF MANAGEMENT WHERE RELATIONALLY BASED

Nay 61 year old Karen woman

I call a friend who is available, like he's not working. He speak a little bit of English so he's able to explain to the doctor about our daily pain and stuff like that...Most of the time the interpreter is the one that notify me of my appointment. If not, sometime they will notify my kids to let me know, if they cannot reach me....

Shaw 55 year old Karen Man

I need their help because I don't know how to get there and I don't read the name of the street and stuff like that....For people like us we always need assistance, language support and accompaniment to show us the place and stuff like that. Without people's help, maybe we going to be fall under, we don't know what to do, we going to get stuck...



SOCIAL-ENVIRONMENT AND STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS

- I would study at regular [English Language Classes] they have rules and policy that are very strict... its hard for me due to my health problems and if I didn't go they may not believe...she told me that I have to come to class otherwise my name will be erased...my feet is pain...ok older people are not improving then they can have ...class instead of doing nothing. ...I'm trying to say to her I'm not the kind of person that just taking advantage, or just getting government money

■ *Paul 66 year old Karen man*

SOCIAL-ENVIRONMENT AND STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS

- It's extremely difficult for me, because I don't speak the language...I cannot make the appointments on my own...The interpreter, their responsibility is making an appointment for us. So for us, sometimes we ask the people who help us to call and make an appointment...Sometimes, we end up in the walk-in clinic and...when they ask (us for) our family doctor—if we don't know the name and the address...they cannot forward the information that they have seen (us), that they treated us..., it's a missed gap if we go back to our family doctor...they are a bit lost about the information...some of our medical history was missing.

■ *Larry, 62 year old man*

THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

- Health literacy is an important determinant for health, mental health and well-being , however our findings suggest that several factors intersect to promote and or challenge HL and that self management was related to social support and orchestration of social networks amongst adult and older Karen GARs
- Our findings also suggest that building tools for promoting HL amongst the Karen group need to include awareness of historical and cultural factors that shaped language and literacy pre migration, while pictures and use of simple tools can promote HL as well as SM Karen adults continue to experience multiple barriers related to lack of inter sectoral support, collaboration for promoting literacy and health

...[i]t's most helpful that you come to find out the minority people who come here that they don't have a voice to raise, and then you come and see them, find out what the problems, and how can they help-its really [a] benefit for you and us...I really hope it will help both of us....

MIN 62 year old Karen man

QUESTIONS?

Thank you!
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