

Cambodian American Health Forum
Silent Trauma: Response to the Health Emergency Affecting Cambodians
January 13, 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The conference consisted of morning and afternoon sessions with distinct objectives. The morning health forum focused on the **dissemination of information on the health emergency affecting Cambodian American communities and approaches to addressing the emergency**. The 104 participants included representatives of community-based organizations, health care providers, community members, students, researchers, and public health professionals.

Key themes presented by the morning's eight speakers included:

- Trauma related health problems affecting the Cambodian community
- Traditional Cambodian concepts for healing
- Effective medical and clinical approaches to provide health services to Cambodian Americans, including videoconferencing technology and Community Health Workers
- Trauma as a key contributing factor in the development and management of diabetes.

The afternoon session, facilitated by Yani Rose Keo and Bun Hap Prak, focused on **the development of leadership and advocacy for Cambodian American communities**. Over 30 community leaders introduced themselves as nurse practitioners, a youth initiative director from the Bronx, a family practitioner, and representatives from the American Cancer Society, family planning programs, substance abuse programs, student youth movements, after-school programs, AIDS projects, anti-deportation programs, breast and cervical cancer programs, and economic development programs. Three elders urged the young professionals to become more involved in their communities. Forms were distributed to develop a priority list of issues of concern. Participants were asked to rank key issues impacting Cambodian American health on a scale of 1= not a problem to 5 = extreme problem. The top priorities, as indicated by average problem severity, are indicated below.

Top priorities

- 1 **Lack of affordable housing**
- 2 **Lack of healthcare insurance**
- 3 **Mental health problems**
- 4 **Diabetes**
- 5 **Access to translated health education materials**
- 6 Poverty
- 7 Access to appropriate interpreters
- 8 Lack of education for the older generation
- 9 Limited knowledge of educational resources
- 10 Access to understanding health care professionals
- 10 Access to transportation

Access to healthcare remains a major concern in Cambodian American communities.

Based on evaluation of the morning session,

- 93% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the information covered
- 97% found the main themes of the forum to be clear or very clear
- 88% found that the forum improved their knowledge of diabetes and serious psychological distress within Cambodian American communities.
- Those attending planned to use information from the forum to build and strengthen partnerships, to improve general awareness about diabetes and serious psychological distress for Cambodian American communities, to improve health care practice, and to foster advocacy.