

**Psychiatric Evaluation of North Thai—Lua' People and How this Evaluation
Is Influenced by Experience and Culture of the Observers**

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OBJECTIVES :

1. To psychiatrically study in further detail a segment of a predominantly Lua' and North—Thai lowland urban community in Amphoe Mae Sariang, Changwat Mae Hong Son, where a previous survey had identified individuals with severe psychiatric illness ;
2. To study transcultural influences on the psychiatric evaluation of this segment of the population ;
3. To study the effects of training and experience in psychiatric field research on a group of third and fourth year Chiang Mai University medical students ;
4. To study the influence of the affectual reaction medical student observers experienced during interviews on diagnoses they offered ;
5. To provide to medical students experience in doing psychiatric field research and to introduce them to a standardized mental status interview schedule ;
6. To acquaint SEATO Medical Research Laboratory investigators with problems and techniques in psychiatric field research in rural Northern Thailand ;
7. To assess the effects of doing extensive psychiatric interviewing on the community.

DESCRIPTION : A previous cooperative research project surveying disease morbidity and culture in the Mae Sariang area was accomplished under the coordination of LTC Harry C. Holloway, MC. At that time a survey accomplished by Dr. Pricha Singharaj found a number of members of the community identified as having psychiatric illness by the heads of their households. No details were obtained regarding the psychiatric illnesses, but responses indicated a prevalence of 2.8% in the segment of the population surveyed.

Mae Sariang District has a population of 50,000, 30,000 of whom are hill tribes; 80% of the hill tribes are Karen and 8% are Lua'. Mae Sariang town has a high percentage of Lua' emigrees. The town is located west of Chiang Mai and can be reached by plane or via road through the mountains from Chiang Mai.

Located in Mae Sariang town is a local health facility run by the Thai government, a Christian Mission Medical Unit, a Buddhist monk who acts as a lay healer, a Catholic missionary who acts as a medical liaison to his mission hospital in Chiang Mai, and an Australian missionary nurse.

Two Thai psychiatrists, two American psychiatrists, and ten medical students from Chiang Mai University Medical School interviewed the subjects who were identified as being psychiatrically ill by the previous SEATO Lab study. Control subjects were also interviewed; one selected from the same household and two from adjacent households. Selection of the control subject in the same household was decided first on sex, second on age, third on place in sibship. Control subjects from the adjacent households were selected on the basis of the same criteria, plus the necessity that they be from the same ethnic background.

Prior to the data collection phase, the medical students were trained in giving a standardized Spitzer Mental Status Schedule interview at Suan Prung Hospital, Chiang Mai. The Spitzer Mental Status Schedule was translated into North-Thai language in preparation for the data collection interviews.

Before training, the medical students were given a questionnaire to test their knowledge and attitudes in the areas of psychiatry, research, and knowledge of the Mae Sariang region. They were again given this questionnaire after data collection in order to assess any changes resulting from their experiences during the project. Anonymity of the participating medical students in answering these questionnaires was maintained throughout the project.

PROGRESS: Data as reported in the previous Annual Report has been ordered, and analysis of several of the data have been completed during this year. Write-up of data and publication is anticipated during the coming fiscal year.

SUMMARY: A transcultural psychiatric study of a segment of a predominantly North-Thai Lua' community was accomplished utilizing North Thai medical students, Thai psychiatrists, and American psychiatrists. Comparisons of diagnoses and recommended treatment, and correlation with the results of standard mental status examinations and psychological tests were made. Analysis and write-up for publication will be completed during the next fiscal year.