

## **A Look at Southeast Asia: A Multicultural Experience**

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### **Learning Outcomes**

- Identify current speech and audiology services available in Vietnam and Cambodia
- List barriers for development of speech and audiology services in Vietnam and Cambodia
- Generate a list of practical ideas as to how each practicing clinician in the United States can assist in the development of speech and audiology services in Vietnam and Cambodia

### **Overview of Viet Nam**

- Viet Nam occupies the eastern and southern part of the Indochinese peninsula in Southeast Asia
- It stretches in a long and narrow north-south axis along the South China Sea and is roughly twice the size of Arizona
- China is to its north and the Mekong River delta to its south
- Laos and Cambodia lie to its west
- The capital city is Hanoi in the north; Ho Chi Minh City in the south is the largest city of this country of 87 million inhabitants
- Viet Nam is a country that has survived decades of war, colonialism, and communism
- Viet Nam is fiercely protective of its independence and sovereignty, but graciously welcomes foreign visitors and guests
- Although still a poor country with low per capita, Vietnam has made great strides in the educational arena since 1997 and now has a literacy rate of 92%
- With the assistance of humanitarian organizations and the WHO, the Vietnamese government and its people have been working to increase the number of health centers and hospitals in districts and provinces across the country

### **Current Speech and Language Services**

- In Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), the Center of Rehabilitation was established in 1960 for adults in HCMC and 12 southern (Mekong) provinces
- Its mission is to take care of the over 30,000 persons injured in the Viet Nam war and to provide services to those with stroke, traumatic brain injury from Agent Orange, dementia, spinal cord injury, burns, and Parkinson's disease
- The Center of Rehabilitation provides primarily orthopedic services to over 2000 patients a year
- Through a cooperative program with the Red Cross in Geneva, Switzerland, they are able to provide artificial limbs to land mine amputees free of charge
- The center consists of one consulting room with X-ray and laboratory, an operating room, a few rehabilitation rooms, and more than 100 beds for patients after operation
- Children's Hospital #1 was built in 1954 and provides services to children in HCMC as well as the southern provinces

- With 300 doctors and 600 nurses, the hospital has provided outpatient services to more than 1,400,000 children
- Agent Orange exposure has resulted in a large percentage of children being born with varying degrees of Down Syndrome, mental retardation, hydrocephalus, and autism
- In addition to medical care, early intervention assessment and intervention is being attempted
- Most children who come for outpatient services are younger than three years of age, and more than 6000 children, between birth and six years of age, have been identified as having some kind of speech and/or language disorder (e.g., 2212 have language disorders; 1132 were identified as being on the autistic spectrum; and 600 had mental delays)
- 800 children have been identified with hearing loss and some need cochlear intervention
- Children are referred to the hospital from their preschool when they are 3 years of age or from their primary schools when they are 6 years of age
- Children with communication impairments are often not permitted to attend school
- More males than females are receiving services.
- Children identified with needing intervention attend their day care unit where they receive PT and OT, as well as speech therapy provided by PTs who incorporate sensory motor activities and language stimulation
- Feeding therapy, play therapy, and oral motor functioning therapy are provided in a very child centered environment
- Dr. Pham Ngoc Thanh was trained by a visiting SLP and so she is working with parents on developing their children's language
- For children less than 3 years of age, the focus when they come to the clinic is building a pre-verbal skill set by educating the parents on the need for early intervention and how to interact with their children by reading to them and talking to them about what they are doing
- Founded in 1976, The National College of Education has developed four departments including the Department of Early Childhood Education, the Department of Music Education, the Department of Fine Arts, and the Department of Special Education.
- The college trains more than 4000 students each year in college level pre-service training, in-service training, and teaching
- The special education curriculum, with its 20 week internship, prepares teachers in specialty areas of hearing, visual, and intellectual impairments.

### **Barriers to Speech and Language Services**

- Lack of resources
- Speech-language pathology does not yet exist as a specialty in Viet Nam
- There is only one SLP in Viet Nam and she works for the National College of Education, Department of Special Education
- Great difficulty with nonverbal and autistic kids—some children with behavioral difficulties are placed in cages as parents can't control
- Because of the move away from extended family structures to more nuclear family structures, especially in the big cities, children are placed in front of the TV and are not getting appropriate stimulation

- TV influences children and 100% of kids are exposed to TV resulting in poor mother-child interaction and stimulation
- Medical insurance is available only to government employees or you have to buy it
- Agent Orange has affected remote villages and the poor because it has permeated their living environment
- Health care facilities are available only in major cities so rural folks have to travel for health care

### **How to Help**

- Join the new ASHA Special Interest Division (SID) on International Practice
- Attend continuing education seminars on International Practice—there will be two panel presentations at the upcoming ASHA Convention
- The medical staff at the Center of Rehabilitation are interested in learning more about how to provide communicative and cognitive services to their patients as their primary rehabilitative outreach consists of occupational and physical therapy
- The medical staff at the Center of Rehabilitation are hungry for further educational information about speech-language pathology as the specialty does not exist yet in Viet Nam
- The medical staff at the Center of Rehabilitation wants help in addressing the communicative, psychological, and spiritual need of their patients.
- They need SLPS willing to come to Viet Nam to offer short courses
- They need picture communication systems for communicating patients who cannot talk
- They want to partner with university programs and clinical service delivery sites to send students and professionals to the US for training
- The Children's Hospital #1 is in need of SLPs to provide communicative and swallowing services and to help identify children on the autism spectrum
- The Special Education Department is looking to develop a curriculum and training program for speech-language therapy
- The faculty from the Special Education Department want help in creating a new college degree track in speech-language therapy

### **Overview of the Kingdom of Cambodia**

- The Kingdom of Cambodia is a country slightly smaller than the state of Oklahoma
- Cambodia is a country at the crossroads of recovery from the brutal years of Khmer Rouge rule and the death and suffering inflicted by Pol Pot's regime
- Cambodians take great pride in their nationhood and the Angkor Empire remains a symbol to be found on Cambodia's flag, its national beer, hotels and guesthouses
- Cambodians are an incredibly warm and hospitable people, and their stoicism and spirit are humbling
- Of the 15 million Cambodians, 50% are under the age of 21 years, and 12 million live in rural areas
- The average life expectancy is 62 years
- Major diseases influencing health outcomes are HIV/AIDs, bacterial and protozoan diarrhea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, dengue fever, Japanese B encephalitis, and malaria

- Dengue fever and Japanese B encephalitis result in cerebral palsy type sequelae for those children who contract it because parent do not know how to bring the fever down so brain damage is incurred
- In addition, limb amputations from left over land mines, burns from cooking fire and acid accidents, middle ear disease and deafness, cleft lip and palate and other craniofacial disorders, and spinal cord anomalies from lack of prenatal care and malnutrition contribute to a very large percentage of moderate to severe developmental disabilities among the child and youth population
- Because many of the most educated Cambodians did not survive Pol Pot's reign of terror, most people in Cambodia have little understanding of disabilities and disability issues, and the best practices need to support people with disabilities to achieve their full potential

### **Current Speech and Language Services**

- There are two medical schools in Phnom Penh supporting dentistry and nursing
- If people can afford it, they go to Viet Nam or Thailand for critical care issues
- NGOs have a limited number of hospitals with fairly archaic services
- In the last 15 years, psychology and physiotherapy (PT + OT) professional services have been developed
- One SLP, Dr. Alice Smith, Director of E & E Speech Education and Therapy Center, has been providing services in Cambodia for the last 8 years, including home visits in rural areas
- Dr. Smith, an adjunct lecturer at the University of Iowa's Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, spends eight months a year volunteering her speech-language pathology services to the children of Cambodia
- She also provides speech therapy training for staff working with children with speech, language, hearing disorders, and cleft lip and palate, at hospitals and organizations within Cambodia
- Her work with the Cleft Lip/Palate Children's Surgical Center at the Children's Pediatric Hospital has led to the development of preoperative assessment materials in Khmer as well as the distribution of feeders and toothbrushes
- Audiology services, directed by Glyn Vaughan at All Ears Cambodia, have been provided for the last 6 years
- All Ears in Cambodia is an audiology clinic partnering with more than 26 NGOs in Cambodia
- The clinic evaluates middle ear disease, hearing status, and provides free hearing aids and follow up to clients of all ages
- It has a fully equipped ear mold laboratory and a hearing aid repair service on site
- The Rabbit School was established in 1997 within the government operated National Borei Orphanage to provide educational and therapeutic activities for children with disabilities who had been orphaned or abandoned by their families because of severe disabilities
- The establishment of the Rabbit School was the first step toward developing appropriate formal educational programs for Cambodian children with multiple and severe disabilities
- Children are feed rice twice a day large bowls of food
- In 2005, the Rabbit School began integrating children with severe/profound disabilities with other children with health disabilities due to HIV/AIDS and malnutrition

- At the Rabbit School, Dr. Smith has identified communication profiles for children in Khmer and English, and has been training the staff through inservice activities on safe feeding practices
- With the help of the Komar Pikar Foundation, children receiving education at the Rabbit School are now receiving individualized assessment and educational plans within an inclusive environment
- When additional funding through donations is available, children are provided with relevant extra-curricular activities such as school trips and swimming
- Recent donations of a computer and educational software are also helping to increase learning opportunities
- The Rabbit School provides education to approximately 45 pupils in either morning or afternoon sessions and another 44 children receive physical therapy

### **Barriers to Speech and Language Services**

- The number one barrier to speech-language services and appropriate health care, nutrition, and education is poverty
- A majority of Cambodians believe in karma; they blame injury and disability on wrongdoings in a previous life
- Cambodians also have a strong belief in spirits and ghosts
- Healers are available to villagers and profess to be able to cure anything so Cambodians are suspicious of western medicine
- Parents want a quick fix (a medicine or surgery)
- There is a high level of embarrassment over disability in children; the family may hide the disabled child in the home or abandon the child, hoping she or she will find a better life with someone else
- Many disabled children are not sent to school and getting parents involved in their child's care can be difficult
- Another challenge is the government; health care and educational service agencies have had to prove to the government that that disabled children deserve services
- Lack of transportation, especially in rural areas, makes service accessibility and service sustainability difficult

### **How to Help**

- Join the new ASHA Special Interest Division (SID) on International Practice
- Attend continuing education seminars on International Practice—there will be two panel presentations at the upcoming ASHA Convention
- The need for service delivery in both rural and urban areas of Cambodia is more than one SLP can handle
- Expertise is needed in a variety of areas, especially swallowing, adult cognitive-communicative impairments, autism and a commitment of at least a month or more would be great
- Contact Dr. Alice Smith [aesmith1999@gmail.com](mailto:aesmith1999@gmail.com) and she can put you in touch with NGOs that assist in these areas

- Although Alice has partnered with university training programs in Australia and Great Britain, and has worked with a number of students, there is a need for CCC level professionals to provide services
- Alice is appreciative of the “help” being volunteered as it raises awareness but she doesn’t have time to supervise students in training
- Help developing culturally and linguistically appropriate materials and educational models for Cambodian children and adults, including those with neurological injuries—she doesn’t need more tests in English, but needs help in creating them in Khmer
- Instrumentation is needed, especially a portable pediatric endoscope, a portable tympanometer, portable audiometer, materials for children who need AAC, cleft feeders (Meade Johson)
- Sending materials may result in taxable levies for the receiver so all instrumentation needs to come into the country in luggage, so either bring it to Cambodia in your own luggage or mail it to Alice’s home address in the US
- Meet or contact key people in the country and make a commitment to service through assistance with material development, monetary donations, and/or volunteerism
- Using Cambodian contacts in the United States, collect data on development norms
- Monetary donations can be made to:
  - Dr. Alice E. Smith by emailing her at [aesmith1999@gmail.com](mailto:aesmith1999@gmail.com) She will use the money to purchase toothbrushes and feeders for her work at the National Pediatric Hospital and Norodom Sihanouk Hospital in Phnom Penh, for paying training salaries, and for purchasing supplies to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, such as cards, video training sessions, etc.
  - All Ears Cambodia <http://www.all ears cambodia.org/donate/index.html>,
  - The Komar Pikar Foundation which partners with the Rabbit School <http://www.komarpikar.org/Pages/Donation/What you can support us.pdf>
  - (The Komar Pikar Foundation is a non-political, non-profit, non-religious, non-governmental entity established in 2007 to specifically raise awareness about the thousands of Cambodian children and youth who are moderately or severely disabled and to bring attention to and partner with government ministries and civil organizations to ensure that policies and services are implemented to address the needs of these children and youth)
- Consider a Fulbright opportunity or participate in professional travel opportunities to these countries (e.g., Smile Train; People to People Ambassadors Program)
- Found out more about communication disorders international at <http://www.comdisinternational.com/welcome.htm>