



CARING FOR OLDER CAMBODIAN SURVIVORS OF TORTURE (SOT)

**ORR Services for Survivors of Torture (SOT) Program
Virtual Town Meeting
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Metta Health Center/Lowell Community Health Center



Overview

- Cambodian refugees in the U.S.
- Access issues in the care of older Cambodian SOTs
- Clinical issues in the care of older Cambodian SOTs

Background

- 1975-1979: Khmer Rouge kill nearly 2 million Cambodians
- 1979-1989: nearly 150,000 Cambodian refugees resettle in the U.S., including in Massachusetts
- 2024: Cambodian Americans represent approximately 21% of the population of Lowell, MA



Not allowed to (could be killed if):

- Talk about the past
- Have a boy/girlfriend
- Visit family members
- Wear own clothes
- Find or eat your own food
- Sing unauthorized songs
- Complain in any way
- Make own decisions

Digging own grave

Seeing others taken away
to be killed

Being taken away to be killed

Seeing or hearing (e.g., screams) others being killed

Suffocation by plastic bag



Lack of food, shelter, medical care

Forced:

- to leave home and belongings
- hard labor
- to take homemade medication/ shots
- separation from family
- marriage
- to witness atrocities
- to work as animals

Brutal beating

Threats of death, intimidation

Interrogation

Imprisonment/confinement

Brainwashing

Rape, sexual abuse

Public humiliation



Metta Health Center



- Founded by the Southeast Asian refugee community in Lowell
- Provides multidisciplinary services, including primary care and mental health services
- Located within a larger Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)



Caring for older Cambodian SOTs – Access Issues



- Language Access
- Technology
- SARS-CoV2 pandemic effects
- Trust and self-advocacy

Caring for older Cambodian SOTs – Clinical Issues

- Views on treatment/adherence
- Impact of role changes and job loss
- Social isolation
- Complex trauma presentations



AP Photo

Thank You

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