

## **This is Health for our Families! - Montagnard Hypertension Prevention**

By: [S. Sudha](#), [Sharon D. Morrison](#), Andrew J. Young, and H'Yua Adrong

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### **Abstract:**

This report describes the activities funded by the CDLC Grant for Diverse Language Learner Communities, namely, a Community Health Fair, conducted on April 10, 2016. This event was offered on community request, as reciprocity for an ongoing community-initiated research program examining chronic health conditions among the Montagnard refugee community of Greensboro, NC.

**Keywords:** Montagnard refugees | community | health care access | hypertension

### **Article:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

*This is Health for our Families! - Montagnard Hypertension Prevention*

S. Sudha, PhD

*Associate Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies  
Research Fellow, Center for New North Carolinians  
University of North Carolina, Greensboro*

Sharon D. Morrison, PhD

*Associate Professor, Department of Public Health Education  
Research Fellow, Center for New North Carolinians  
University of North Carolina, Greensboro*

Andrew J Young, MFA

*Volunteer Coordinator, Bonner Center  
Guilford College  
Research Fellow, Center for New North Carolinians*

H'Yua Adrong, BSW, Class of 2016

*University of North Carolina, Greensboro Alumna  
President, Montagnard American Organization*

**INTRODUCTION**

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This report describes the activities funded by the CDLC Grant for Diverse Language Learner Communities, namely, a Community Health Fair, conducted on April 10, 2016. This event was offered on community request, as reciprocity for an ongoing community-initiated research program examining chronic health conditions among the Montagnard refugee community of Greensboro, NC.

**BACKGROUND**

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Montagnards are a unique multi-tribal, multi-lingual group from the highlands of Vietnam (>9000 individuals) who reside in the Piedmont Triad of North Carolina. They are particularly vulnerable to poor health outcomes as result of environmental (i.e. forced migration, leading to a major shift from an agriculture-based to a technology-oriented lifestyle), and social (i.e. disruptions in family life and community relationships), health related (poor nutrition and lack of access to preventive care) stressors. These act as precursors to chronic conditions such as hypertension. In response to this, Montagnard tribal and religious leaders approached area institutions (UNCG, Guilford College, and NC A&T) for technical assistance with implementing culturally appropriate responses to hypertension in their communities. This Health Fair was part of the translational dissemination efforts associated

with a 2-year, community engaged, interdisciplinary and participatory action research project examining family relationships, hypertension risk and management among Montagnard adults.

**OUTCOMES**

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The health fair was held at the Auxiliary Gymnasium of the Walter Hines Page High School from 12pm-5pm on Sunday April 10, 2016. The event targeted Montagnard families from 7 different tribal and language groups, and the pastors and congregations of 5 local Montagnard churches. The health fair was divided into 3 intervention zones: Red zone, with clinicians for health screenings and consultations for those with hypertension and other diagnosed conditions; Yellow Zone, with health insurance and primary care/community health enrollment coordinators for health access, and white/green zone with legal, education and health information exhibitors and resources (e.g. private legal services, S.E. Asian Association citizenship program, *Say Yes to Education*, UNCG Admissions Office, American Heart Association, UNCG Health Coaching, nutrition and wellness education, fruits and vegetable tables; seeds for farming and healthy cooking demonstration). The health fair was staffed by including local/regional physicians and nurses affiliated with Cone Health and Duke University; UNCG School of Nursing students; the Departments of Public Health Education, Human Development and Family

Studies and Nutrition students, staff and faculty; Guildford College Bonner Center staff and community scholars; biology and social work students from NC A& T State University; interpreters from the Montagnard American Organization. More than 50 adults from 7 tribal groups (with accompanying family members) attended the health fair. These participants also represented 5 tribal languages. See figure 1.

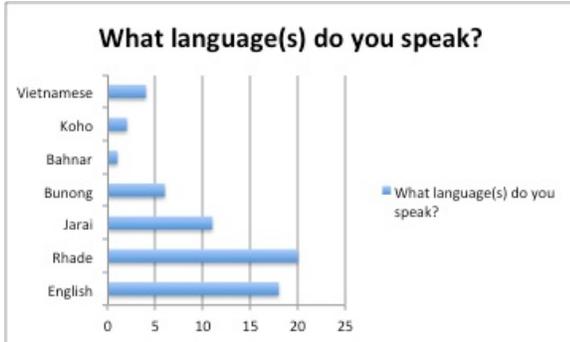


Figure 1. Languages spoken by participants

Participants were welcomed at an intake station where they provided demographic and health related information to volunteers. This information was used to better direct them to needed services.



Figure 2. Intake Procedures at the health fair

For example, those with diagnosed illness were escorted by a volunteer/interpreter to the respective medical provider for health screening and consultation. Each individual received a “goody/grocery” bag with information about the exhibits and health related tokens (e.g. hand sanitizers, pens/pencils, notepads with contact information for services). Participants were encouraged to fill out a short evaluation form once

they completed their time at the fair. The majority of attendees reported having a very good/good experience at the health fair. See Figure 3.

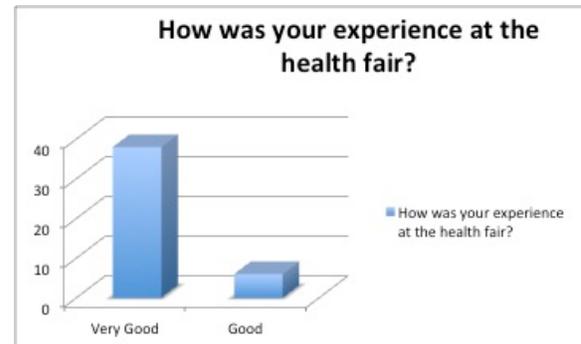


Figure 3. Attendee Experience at the health fair

*Family Stressor/Family Violence Awareness*

Montagnard community stakeholders were keen to cover the topic of family violence awareness as part of the Health Fair. However, community elders and church leaders indicated that it was not culturally appropriate to do so. Therefore, the topic was addressed during a meeting of the Montagnard Women’s Learning Group, which meets regularly at another venue, for English language classes, job skills, and companionship. The meeting was held on May 17th, 2016, and was facilitated by Kiran Inc, a NC Triangle based not-for-profit that provides free family violence / crisis services to Asian immigrant groups. Montagnard, Bonner Center, and UNCG volunteers all enacted short plays illustrating key issues, which had been previously identified and scripted with Montagnard student input. Kiran staff members facilitated the discussion. Approximately 20 Montagnard women participated in the discussion, and agreed that the issue was common in their communities. Suggestions for next steps were discussed.

**SUMMARY**

The CDLC-funded Montagnard Health Fair with the follow-up Family Violence Awareness meeting (Spring 2016) was a success, and represented an important give-back to this diverse-language community for our ongoing community-engaged participatory action research. Based on community feedback we will work with stakeholders to plan an additional health event for Spring 2017.