AETC-NMC
AIDS Education and Training Center
National Multicultural Center
HOWARD UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Case Study Adapted from Addressing HIV Care and Asian American Model

- A Vietnamese woman was rushed to the hospital by her adult children. The emergency room personnel discovered dark red welts running up her arms, shoulders and chest, yet the only presenting complaint was dizziness. When questioned, her son explained that he had rubbed her body with a quarter. A nurse becomes concerned when she finds an elderly Chinese patient rubbing himself with a quarter (she thought he was trying to hurt himself). When she took the coin away from the patient, he became very upset, grabbed it back from her and continued to rub his arms and legs, leaving dark red scratches.

- A Vietnamese girl in her first year at an American elementary school was not feeling well one morning, so her mother rubbed the back of her neck with a coin. When the school staff discovered the welts on the girl's neck, they immediately assumed they were seeing a case of child abuse and reported the family to the authorities.

Discussion

In each case the patient was practicing a traditional form of healing known as coin rubbing. There are several variations, including heating the coin, but they all involve vigorously rubbing the body with a coin. This produces red welts, which can distract medical staff from the real problem of treatment or be mistaken for child abuse. It is important to recognize and become familiar with this practice, and not to be distracted from the real problem or mistakenly make accusations of child abuse.

- Discuss other Cultural Competence issues that may impact retention into care and treatment.