



Thursday, June 1st



2:00pm to 3:15pm



Room LACC, Room 501

Overcoming Stigma: Mental Health Awareness for International Students & Scholars

Presenters



Patricia Burak
Director
Slutzker Center for International
Services
Syracuse University



Justin Chen, MD, MPH
Co-Founder, Massachusetts General
Hospital Center for Cross-Cultural
Student Emotional Wellness
Assistant Professor in Psychiatry,
Harvard Medical School



Keith Clausen
President
Envisage International
Corporation
International Student Insurance

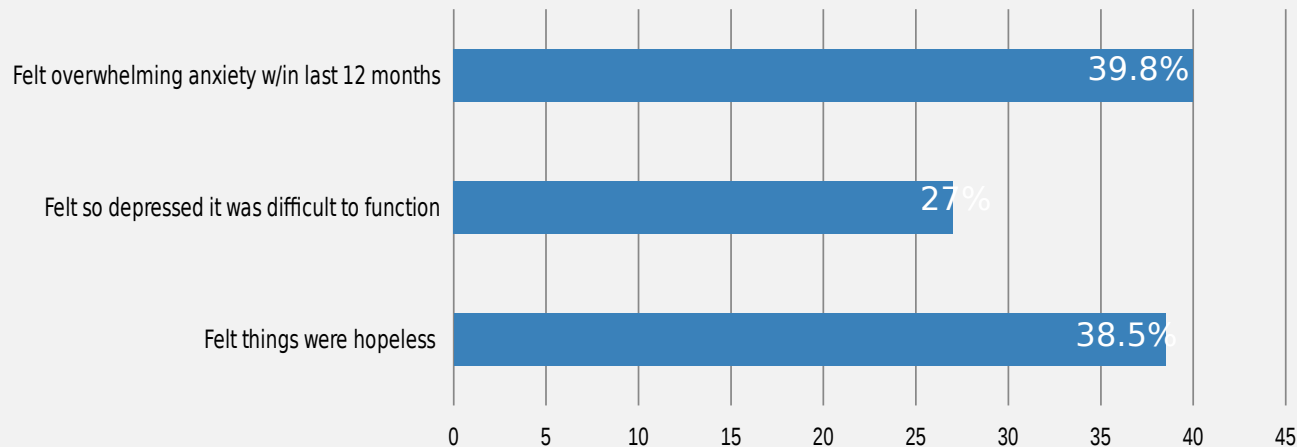


Xuhua Qin, PhD
Psychologist, Multicultural Specialist
Counseling and Mental Health
Services
Tufts University

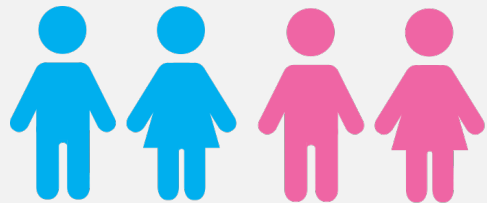
Agenda

- What's Going On With Our Students
- Understanding the Challenges – The Chinese Example
- Seeking Care
- Programming That Works
- Resources
- Discussion & Questions

What's Going On?

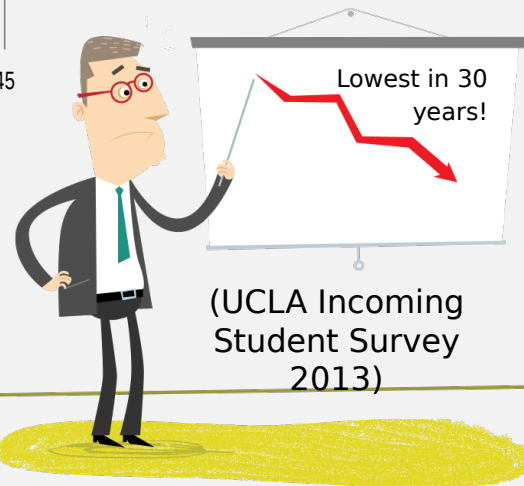


(ACHA, Spring 2013)



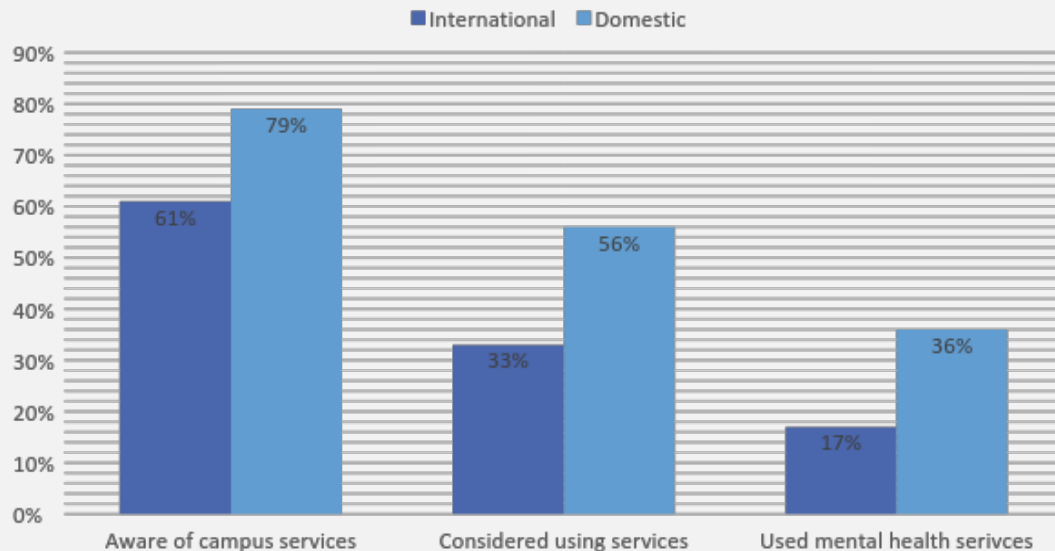
46% Diagnosed

(NIMH, 2013)



Mental Health Care Underutilized

Mental Health Need,
Awareness, and Use of
Counseling Services Among
International Graduate
Students, Journal of American
College Health



Understanding the Challenges

The Chinese Example



Case Study

- 25 year-old Chinese international student in 2nd year of doctoral program
- “Disappeared” from classes; no response to emails or phone calls
- Advisor eventually walked her to your office
- “I’ve had difficulty in my classes and been sick recently. I need more time for assignments but don’t feel I can ask for it. I was a top student in China and am ashamed of my performance, so I’ve been avoiding my advisor.”

East Meets West On Campus

- 1978: China's economic opening to the West
- Pedagogical difference
- Communication styles
- Social norms /4-2-1 generation
- Vulnerable transition period for individuals of all cultures





EDUCATION

ALIENATION 101

There were hopes that the flood of Chinese students into America would bring the countries closer. But a week at the University of Iowa suggested to Brook Larmer that the opposite may have happened

BROOK LARMER | APRIL/MAY 2017



Common Issues

"For many Chinese students, the language barrier can be tough to overcome, and culturally, it's simply more comfortable to cluster together. But the largely monolingual American students don't make much effort, either."

"Some nights, Haddy goes to bed and realises she hasn't spoken a word of English all day."

Communication Styles

Verbal v. non-verbal
High-context vs. low-context

"Chinese students who return with an American degree, known in China as 'sea turtles,' used to be all but guaranteed an accelerated career path in China."

Career Planning

Finances
Area of Study
Planning

"I hate how the Asians here talk in the library and cheat on their tests. Like get the f--k out."

Identity

Acculturation
Social Class
Race
Discrimination

"Like many Chinese students, she was a city girl in a country town. 'I wondered where the subway was.'

Second language anxiety

Daily routine,
Communication with
professors and classmates,
Coordinating a living
situation,
Asking for help

Academic

Formal vs. informal classroom,
Presentational styles,
Outcome vs. process orientate

"[Haddy's] professor has already warned her about the improper use of footnotes and borrowed text – academic niceties unfamiliar to Chinese kids taught at home to regurgitate facts for their exams."

Interpersonal

Boundaries,
Peer Pressure,
Parental Expectations

"Haddy has never felt comfortable participating in the more decadent rites of American university life – the frat parties and binge-drinking."

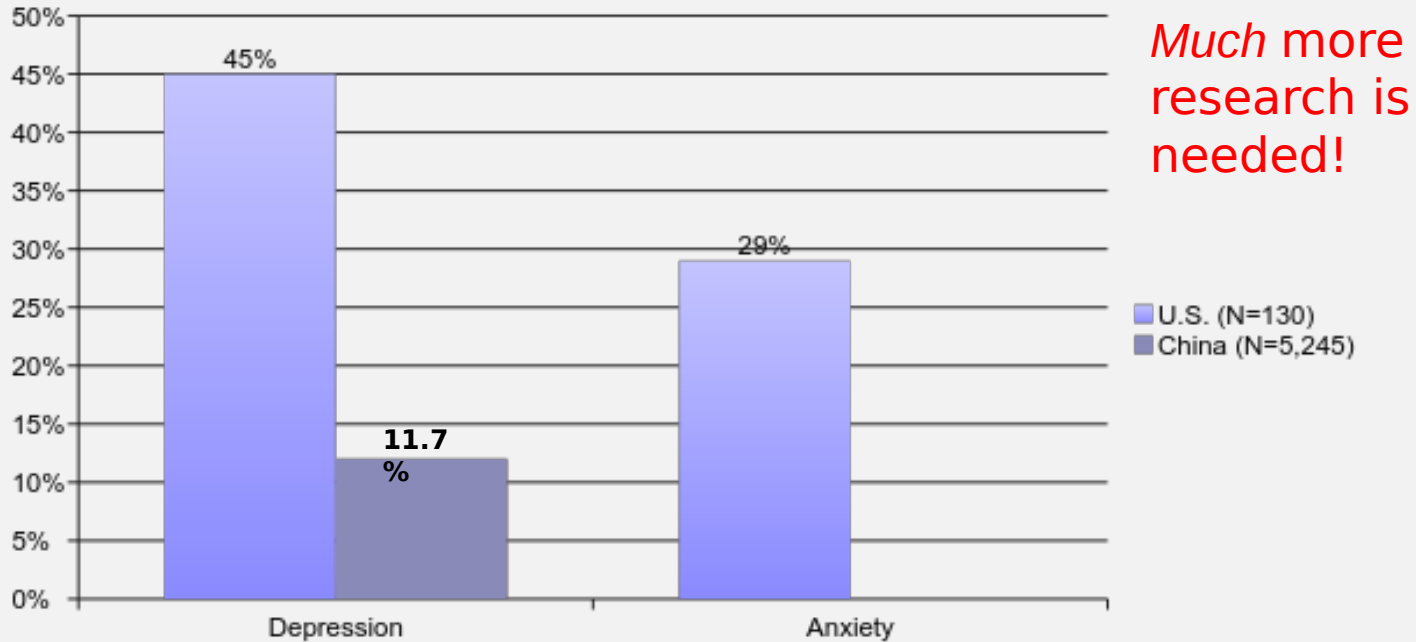


“All decent parents want to do what's best for their children.
The Chinese just have a totally different idea of how to do that.”

– Amy Chua
Battle Hymn



What Are the Data?



Han X, Han X, Luo Q, Jacobs S, Jean-Baptiste M. J Am Coll Health. 2013;61:1-8.

Chen L, Wang L, Qiu XH, et al. PLoS One. 2013;8.

AAPI college mental health

- Suicide is a leading cause of death for all Americans age 18-24
- Asian Americans more likely to have suicidal thoughts and to attempt suicide than Whites
- Asian American women age 15-24 have the second-highest rate of completed suicide of any race/ethnicity in that age group



Top 4 Psychological Challenges

1. Separation from parents
2. Face and shame
3. Clash of cultures
4. Identity formation



Face and Shame

- “Face” (面子 / 臉)
- “Men cannot live without shame. A sense of shame is the beginning of integrity.”– Mencius (孟子)
- Comparisons
- Focus on external
- Shame linked to suicide



Chen J, Liu L. Sampan. 9/5/14.
Mencius. London: Penguin Books; 2003.

Clash of Cultures



Chinese

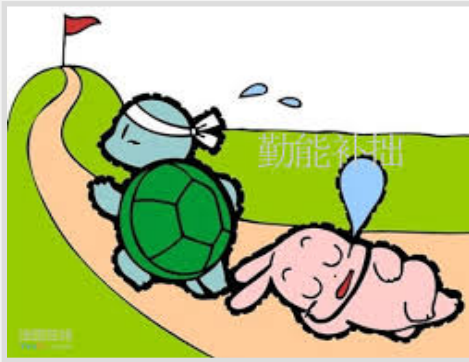
- Diligence
- Obedience
- Harmony

Western

- Natural talent
- Independence
- Pursuit of individual fulfillment and happiness

Chinese cultural narrative

勤能補拙



"Diligence can make up for lack of intelligence."

不能輸在起跑線上



"Do not lose at the starting line."

光宗耀祖



"Bring honor/glory to your ancestors."

Barriers to Treatment

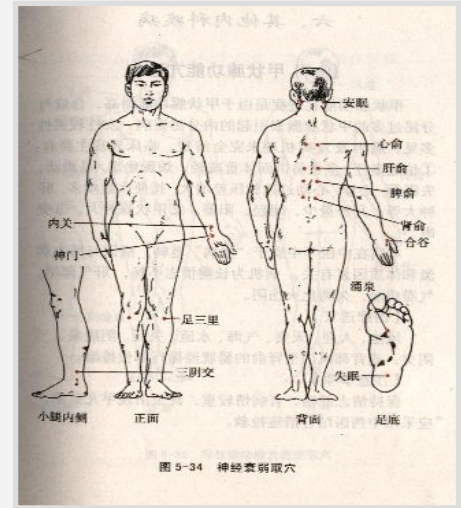
- Role of psychiatry in many Asian countries
- Low mental health literacy
- Unaware of services
- Language barriers
- Stigma



Yeung A, Kung W. Psychiatric News. 2004; 21(1): 34-36.
Kim BSK, Omizo MM. Couns. Psychol. 2003; 31:343-46.

Culture and Stigma

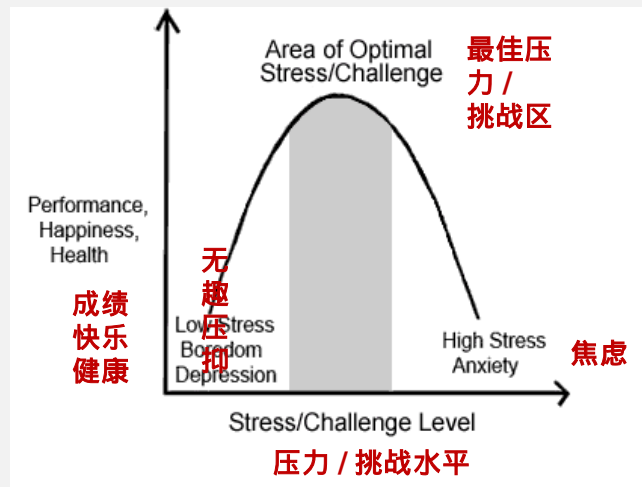
- Mental illness is highly stigmatized in Chinese culture (~ psychosis)
- Implications for marriage
- “Neurasthenia”(神经衰弱)
- “Somatization”



Cupping points for treating neurasthenia.

Differences in presentation

- May not acknowledge depressed mood
- Increased somatic complaints (disruption in sleep and appetite, stomachaches, headaches, dizziness)
- Avoidance, procrastination, academic decline
- Cross-cultural bridge: “Stress” (压力)





Case study continued

- “Very overwhelmed”; not sleeping or eating well for weeks
- “What if I don’t need to worry about all these difficulties anymore?”
- Homesick, isolated, but did not tell parents
- Has never had counseling before. “Why would talking to someone help me? And will it go on my record?”

Common Mental Health Myths

Counseling is
for
crazy people.

"Everyone will know
I saw a counselor."

Only someone from
my home country
will understand my
problem.

I can handle my own
mental health problems.
If I can't, that means I'm
weak.

I could lose
my
visa status.

Seeking Care



Observe and Approach

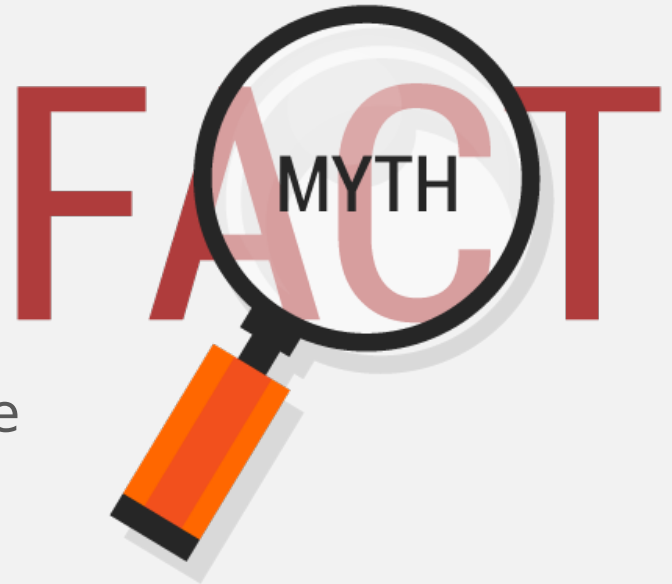
- Noticing difficulties
- Acknowledging and asking
- Being patient and being willing to listen
- Somatic vs. psychological focus
- Seeking consultation

When to Refer

- Deterioration in Personal Hygiene or Dress
- Dramatic Weight Loss or Gain
- Noticeable Changes in Mood
- Excessive Absences
- Academic Problems
- Social Isolation and Unusual Behaviors
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Threat of Harm to Themselves or Others

Addressing Myths

- Emphasizing it is a sign of strength
- Explaining confidentiality
 - Not on school record/transcript
 - Friends, family and sponsor will not know
- Won't affect visa status
- Cultural competency – counselors are trained to be open, knowledgeable, and skillful



How to Refer

- Introducing counseling
- Make the call or walk in together
- Make no assumptions and ask their provider preference
- Build a relationship with the Counseling Center



After the Counseling Center

- Set a reminder to follow-up with the student
- Ask questions about the meeting
- Be sure to listen for barriers
- Encourage to go consistently
- Counseling is voluntary

Programming That Works



Building the Trust

Creating the Connection

- Include mental health and counseling information pre-departure
- Introduce counseling/wellness initiatives
- Testimonials from current students

Mental Health in Orientation

- Inform students of challenges and cultural adjustment
- Invite counseling center or other mental health professionals
- Educate students about campus/community resources
- Parent and partner programs
- Train peer leaders and mentors about these issues to help guide students

Programming That Helps

- Buddy/Peer mentor programs
- Workshops (e.g., “Decoding U.S. Culture”, “Lost in Translation”, “Culture Shock”)
- “Let’s Talk” Drop-in Hours
- University 101-type courses
- Social organizations/student clubs
- Summer/Holiday programs
- Friendship family programs
- Discussion/Support Groups
- Creative initiatives (e.g., “Welcome to My World Photo Exhibition”)

How to Reduce Stigma

- Dispel the myths
- Know the facts about cultural differences around counseling
- Invite on-campus counselors/psychologists to orientation and meet & greet opportunities
- Educate counselors/psychologists on how to communicate across cultures
- Give testimonials even anonymously, and perhaps in their native language
- Normalize students' concerns and stress
- Creative ways of introducing counseling

Culture of Care

In the International Office

Advisors support students with counseling skills, including:

- Demonstrating empathy
- Reflecting and paraphrasing
- Asking open questions & building rapport
- Keep a professional code of public silence
- Learn how to pronounce names correctly



Culture of Care

In the International Office

In difficult conversations:

- Consider student's reaction v. discomfort delivering news
- Don't avoid because it's uncomfortable (ex: suicide)
- Be positive

Planning Ahead: know whom to call and how to behave

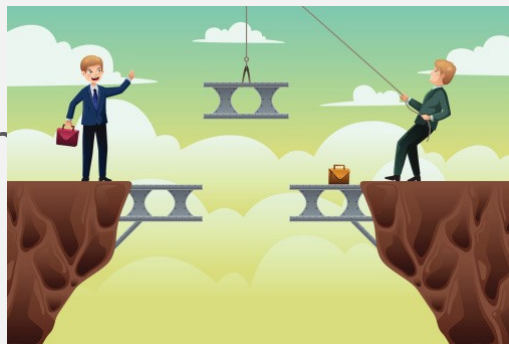
Training:

- Step up bystander intervention trainings
- Campus connect training for suicide prevention

Building Bridges

Mental Health outside of the mental health sphere

- Depression screening at Student Health Center
- Establishing a knowledge-sharing community (know your partners)
- Highlight counseling center events through newsletters, social media, etc.
- Know the services offered around campus, and
 - Chapel
 - Ombudsperson Office
 - Dean of Students
 - Child and Family Studies





Resources & Hotlines

Pre-departure, Orientation, Online, Case
Studies

Resources

NAFSA Resources

- Health and Wellness for International Students
- Best Practices in Addressing Mental Health Issues Affecting Education Abroad Participants www.nafsa.org/Find_Resources/
- Crisis Management in a Cross Cultural Setting: ISSS www.nafsa.org/wcm/Cust/Custom_Cart/Product_Detail.aspx?prodid=450
- Working with International Student or Scholars with Mental Health Issues <https://www.nafsa.org/findresources/Default.aspx?id=27117>

Mental Health Awareness Video



www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/explained/mental-health-video.php



Research

MGH Center for Cross Cultural Student Emotional
Wellness

www.mghstudentwellness.org

- Existing datasets: ACHA-NCHA, Healthy Minds
- Original research: Survey of educators/administrators (20-30 minute online)

Services & Hotlines

Services

- Crisis Text Line

<http://www.crisistextline.org/>

Text 741-741

Hotlines

- National Suicide Prevention

1-800-273-TALK

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE

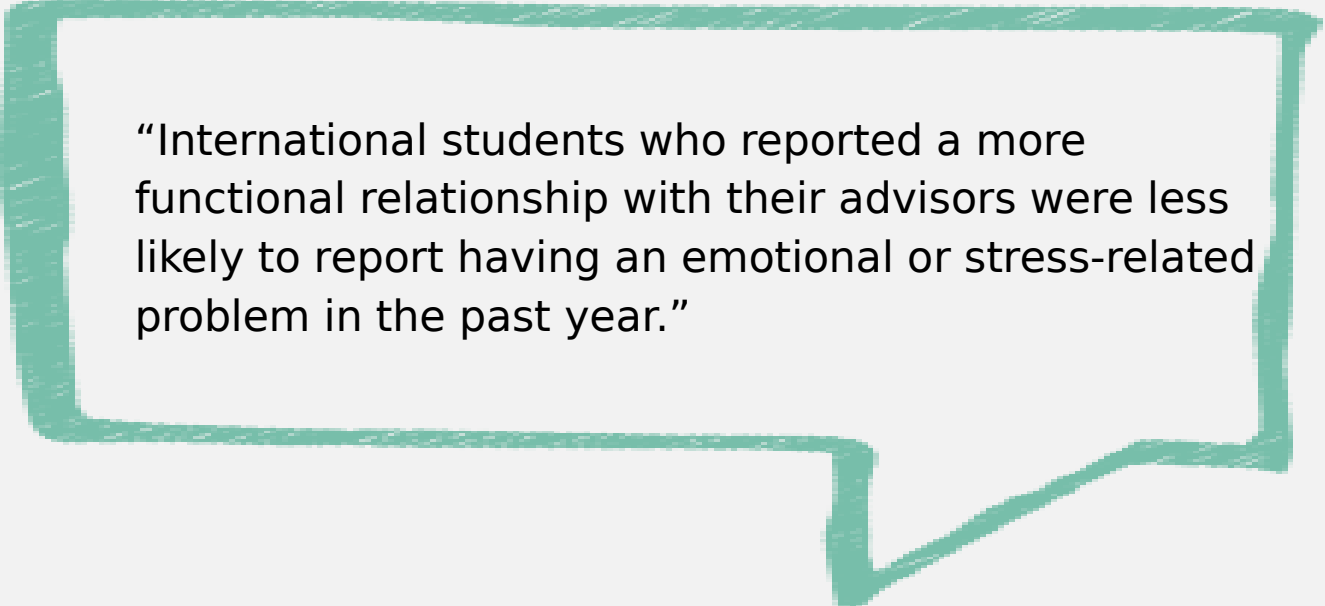
<http://www.thehotline.org/>

- It Gets Better Project (LGBTQ)

1-866-4-U-TREVOR

www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/get-help





“International students who reported a more functional relationship with their advisors were less likely to report having an emotional or stress-related problem in the past year.”

Questions?

(Source: Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lusting, 2010)

Presenters Contact Info



Patricia Burak
paburak@syr.edu



Keith Clausen
kclausen@envisageinternational.com



Justin Chen, MD, MPH
jchen37@partners.org



Xuhua Qin, PhD
Xuhua.qin@tufts.edu