

# **JOHN SPIEGEL MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP: HEALING THE WHOLE FAMILY: AN EDUCATIONAL GRAPHIC NOVEL ABOUT INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA IN AN ASIAN-AMERICAN FAMILY**

Nealie Ngo, MD/MPH Candidate  
Columbia University; University of Toledo  
New York, NY; Toledo, OH

**Background:** Intergenerational (also known as trans- or multigenerational) trauma refers to trauma experienced by one generation (i.e. parents) which gets passed down to subsequent generations (i.e. children). There are few studies studying intergenerational trauma in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations, and even fewer resources for AAPI families struggling with the physical, emotional, and psychological ramifications. Furthermore, mental health and illness may already be a stigmatized and even foreign topic in many AAPI families.

**Methods:** Healing the Whole Family is a graphic novel based off of Grace Chiang's New York Times biographical article about intergenerational trauma in her Taiwanese-American family. The graphic novel describes Grace's struggle with her mental health in the context of her family which, in the beginning, does not acknowledge mental illness. The story follows Grace as she struggles to understand her family's dynamics and her revelations as she discovers how intergenerational trauma within her family plays a large role. In addition to the story, the graphic novel includes "Teaching Points" about concepts shown in the story (i.e. ACEs), which educate and encourage readers to reflect upon aspects of the story that relate to each teaching point. It is set to be published (via social media and website) within the next month and comments will be monitored for reactions and impact.

**Aims:** The graphic novel aims to: 1) create a visually appealing and relatable story for AAPI families that depicts realistic struggles with mental health and illness; 2) provide education to AAPI families about mental health, intergenerational trauma, attachment theory, the circle of security, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs); 3) encourage future conversations about mental health within AAPI families.

**Potential Outcomes and Implications:** Mental health practitioners and AAPI families can potentially use the graphic novel as a culturally sensitive educational and/or therapeutic tool for mental health.

## **Full List of Authors**

Nealie Ngo, Grace Chiang; Eunice Yuen, MD PhD

## **Learning Objectives**

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize the definitions of intergenerational trauma, attachment theory, the circle of security, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and recognize how these may be affected by culture and family dynamics.
2. Explore the potential of using graphic medicine as a vehicle to deliver complex, diverse information and as a form of therapy for patients.