Sabaidee! This is the greeting in the Lao language. Home deliveries without trained birth attendants are significant risk factors for raising mother and infant death rates in Laos. Maternal deaths still make up a sizable fraction of deaths, despite the global improvements in maternal health over the past few decades (Kawaguchi et al., 2021). Most parts of Laos are rural, and the people there do not have resources other than home deliveries. The Lao Women's Union worked nationwide to increase women's roles in society, including running programs that were incredibly successful in urban areas. In the public sector and commercial industry, many women held executive positions, and in urban areas, their wages were frequently higher than men's (Kawaguchi et al., 2021). Women continued to suffer disproportionately from poverty, particularly in rural communities of ethnic minorities. Most of these fatalities take place in impoverished nations without antenatal care services. Although giving birth in a hospital reduces delivery fatalities, using these facilities does not outweigh the cost. Therefore, the decrease in fatalities depends on other factors that reduce the use of those facilities and the growth of delivery institutions.

There are 22,900 people of Asian ethnicity living in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. Within that amount of people, there are about 500 Laotian people. Giving birth on a hotbed, also known as "mother-roasting," is common in many cultures. Mothers lie on a bamboo bed with hot coals underneath it after giving birth to reenergize their bodies and shut the vaginal opening once again. According to Laotian tradition, the "hotbed" and other postpartum care is to balance the mother by keeping her body warm. This practice differs from western medicine because the Lao healing practices are not traditional in the United States. Sixty-four percent (64.7%) of Lao people identify as Buddhists.

Laos's former official religion was Buddhism (Scroope, 2018). Buddhism is still the dominant cultural force in modern-day Laos, even though this is no longer true. Indeed, the nation and its culture are replete with outward symbols of religious awe. "None" (31.4%) is Laos's second most frequently reported affiliation. The remaining population comprises 2.1% who identify as 'other' or did not specify their religion, 1.7% of whom identify as Christians (Scroope, 2018). In most areas of Laos, male providers are more accepted than female providers. Laos is slowly breaking away from older generational traditions and adopting gender equality. The standard structure of the family in Laotian culture is a traditionally large family. Lao households are typically big and close-knit, with an average of four to five kids. It is common for three generations to reside in one home.

In contrast to metropolitan settings, where couples are more likely to have fewer children, rural areas have a higher prevalence of this household arrangement. When speaking to providers or professionals, the men of the family speak. Respecting elders is a substantial cultural norm in Laos. As Laos is adjusting to the modern world, communication is also changing. Before, elders would speak on behalf of the younger generation. For instance, many parents would arrange marriages for their children. However, now, society is changing, and even though that is still happening, it is not as expected. Women are allowed to speak freely but still have to show respect to elders. A nonverbal communication norm is not to stare and to not speak to the elderly while looking into their eyes. It is also respectful to bow when greeting someone. An adequate diet is essential during pregnancy and nursing to promote maternal health and the growth and development of the fetus and the baby. This is crucial in resource-limited environments where low dietary diversity, insufficient intakes, and increased nutrient

needs put breastfeeding and pregnant women at a high risk of nutritional deficiencies. The first month after delivery is the most limiting, with some women saying they can only have rice, galangal, and salt during this time. The first 30 days after giving birth should be spent rigorously adhering to dietary restrictions and only consuming heated chicken and rice. At the same time, some women may be permitted to eat pork, fish, and vegetables 10–20 days following delivery. With the Laotian community in Champaign-Urbana, most traditional beliefs are not practiced. Some women in the community practice beliefs like sweating out after childbirth. Laotian women prefer to use nonpharmacological therapies like sweating as a form of pain relief than to take pain medication.

References

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