

**Culture Report: Chinese Culture**

Benjamin Ruettiger

Lakeview College of Nursing

N432: Maternal-Newborn Care

Debra Kamradt

July 8, 2025

## **Introduction**

It is important to understand and respect the many different populations within the communities we serve as professional nurses. Nurses can foster better trust and deliver more personalized, respectful care by being mindful of the factors influencing healthcare decision-making. The Chinese culture is practiced by many individuals in the United States, and understanding their core values can aid in developing cultural awareness to deliver safe, effective, and empathetic care to patients who identify with Chinese culture.

## **Description**

Chinese culture has had a long-standing and meaningful presence in Chicago, especially in Chinatown and surrounding neighborhoods. According to the 2022 U.S. Census Bureau, 61,475 Chinese residents live in Chicago (Xue & Hu, 2024). Understanding the cultural values of Chinese patients is important in nursing. Practices like traditional Chinese medicine and strong family involvement can shape how individuals approach their health and treatment. Differences in language and perspectives on Western healthcare may also create challenges in communication and adherence to care plans. Nurses can foster better trust and deliver more personalized, respectful care by being mindful of these factors.

## **Core Values**

### **Religion**

Many individuals in Chinese culture blend different spiritual practices, including Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (Pew Research Center, 2021). The Chinese culture typically focuses on elements such as respect for ancestors, balance, and harmony, which can influence their daily life and rituals (Pew Research Center, 2021). Asking preferences before and

during the birthing process can assist in developing a culturally competent birthing plan and ensure the best outcome for the patient and their fetus.

### **Healing Beliefs and Practices**

Chinese patients tend to use traditional methods along with Western approaches to medicine (Zhao et al., 2023). Traditional Chinese medicine focuses on balancing the body's energy forces, and if this balance is disrupted, it can be viewed as the cause of illness or discomfort (Zhao et al., 2023). Because of this, some patients who are childbearing may prefer using herbal remedies, acupuncture, or spiritual healing before considering Western medical treatments (Zhao et al., 2023). Acknowledging, documenting, and educating on the use of traditional Chinese medicine during pregnancy and labor and delivery can lessen drug interactions, all while maintaining respect for the culture.

### **Family Life**

Family is very important in Chinese culture, and healthcare decisions are often made together rather than by the individual (Xu & Yuan, 2024). In China, it is common for doctors to inform both the patient and their family about the patient's condition, especially when family members are present (Xu & Yuan, 2024). Sometimes, families may ask doctors to withhold full information from the patient to protect them from emotional distress. Doctors in China often respect these wishes, even during the labor & delivery process (Xu & Yuan, 2024). During the childbearing experience, being cognizant of the practices in Chinese medicine can assist in communicating and establishing rapport with the Chinese patient and their family.

### **Communication**

Individuals from Chinese cultural backgrounds often prefer to communicate respectfully and non-confrontationally. This is especially true when interacting with authority figures, to

preserve harmony within relationships (Ho et al., 2022). Conversations are typically polite and subtle rather than direct. While delivering care in the OB specialty, medical translation should be used for patients who do not speak or understand English, so that they fully understand the information that is being provided, and they have the opportunity to communicate back. With that, during the childbearing process, clear and concise communication should be established and is best practice so that all the patient's needs are met.

### **Diet**

Traditional Chinese beliefs strongly emphasize diet to support overall health. Traditional Chinese dietary practices state that hot and cold foods help maintain regulation within the body and promote well-being (Holman, 2014). In Chinese culture, a new mother is encouraged to eat and drink hot foods, since her body is believed to be in a weakened state. Fish and seafood, pork and pork products, wheat and wheat products, white rice, spinach, bokchoy, and cabbage were the most reported foods in the Chinese diet (Niu et al., 2024). Understanding, educating, and recommending a diet plan for the patient and their newborn should correlate with their overall diet preferences. Doing so will create the most positive outcomes for the patient and their fetus during the childbearing process.

### **Tips & Interventions**

When working with patients within the Chinese culture, maintaining clear communication, understanding dietary restrictions, and being respectful of the family dynamics are all best practices. If a nurse is questioning the patient's preferences, asking questions is encouraged, and maintaining cultural competence places respect on their culture. Some interventions to be compliant with these tips include the use of translation services if necessary,

asking about their dietary preferences prior to placing food orders, and including the family during the entire childbirth process.

### **Conclusion**

All in all, individuals who identify with Chinese culture make up a large percentage of the patients who are seen in moderate to large cities. Understanding the core values and practices of Chinese-American patients can foster an environment where the patient, their family, and their newborn can receive the highest quality of care. Since the childbearing process from conception to postpartum is very intimate between the patient and the healthcare professionals, remaining cognizant and respectful of their cultural identity creates a rapport for the best patient outcomes and satisfaction.

## References

- Ho, E. Y., Leung, G., Lauer, B., Jih, J., & Karliner, L. (2022). Complementary and integrative healthcare communication in Chinese American patient / primary care visits: An observational discourse analysis. *PEC innovation*, 1, 100082.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pecinn.2022.100082>
- Holman, D. (2014, April 29). *Chinese dietary therapy – Balancing the body with foods and seasons*. Carolinas Natural Health Center. <https://carolinasnaturalhealth.com/chinese-dietary-therapy-balancing-the-body-with-foods-and-seasons/>
- Niu, J., Li, B., Zhang, Q., Chen, G., & Papadaki, A. (2025). Exploring the traditional Chinese diet and its association with health status-a systematic review. *Nutrition reviews*, 83(2), e237–e256. <https://doi.org/10.1093/nutrit/nuae013>
- Pew Research Center. (2021). *Religious composition by country, 2020*.  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/05/01/key-facts-about-asians-in-the-us/>
- Xue, G., & Hu, T. (2024, September 4). *A new Chinatown: Demographics, business landscapes evolve in Chicago’s 11th Ward*. Medill Reports. Northwestern University. Retrieved July 3, 2025, from <https://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/chinatown-demographics-change-11th-ward/>
- Xu, H., & Yuan, M. (2024). Family roles in informed consent from the perspective of young Chinese doctors: a questionnaire study. *BMC medical ethics*, 25(1), 2.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-023-00999-6>

Zhao, Q., Guo, R., Fan, Z., Hu, L., Hu, Z., & Liu, Y. (2023). Medical Conditions and Preference of Traditional Chinese Medicine: Results from the China Healthcare Improvement Evaluation Survey. *Patient preference and adherence*, 17, 227–237.

<https://doi.org/10.2147/PPA.S398644>