

# China



## Communication

### Languages and Dialects

- Official spoken language: Mandarin Chinese
- Speakers of two different dialects will not necessarily understand one another. Interpreters should be able to identify and be conversant in each dialect.
- To promote the use of Mandarin, a Latin alphabet known as Pinyin was introduced in 1958. Pinyin spells out Chinese characters phonetically, which helps with pronunciation.

### Greetings

- Handshakes are common among Chinese people.
- Greet the eldest person in a group first.
- A respectful greeting to an older person could also include a slight nod of the head.

### Names and Titles

- Address a Chinese person by the appropriate title followed by the surname (the name shared by a family).
- If you call someone by their given name without being invited, then you may be considered impolite.

### Non-Verbal Signals

- The concept of 'face' (respect, honor, and reputation) impacts the way Chinese people communicate.
- To avoid appearing to disagree, some Chinese people employ a neutral expression.
- Chinese people may use silence within a conversation to convey respect, disagreement, or lack of understanding.
- Even when they disagree, Chinese people may sometimes nod in an effort to be polite.
- They rarely smile in formal situations; and are more likely to smile when with friends and family in a casual setting.
- The Chinese sometimes avoid eye contact as an act of privacy; people may feel uncomfortable with too much direct eye contact.

## Cultural Norms

### Patient and Provider Interaction

- Maintain a respectful physical distance.
- Try for a more formal tone of voice as you greet Chinese patients and their families.
- Present-tense and past-tense verbs are the same in Mandarin Chinese; when collecting a medical history, practitioners may need to ask a patient to clarify.
- When speaking with authority figures, some Chinese people may express themselves in an indirect way. For example, patients may not speak directly to providers about medical concerns.
- Some Chinese people may avoid saying 'no' to an authority figure.
- Patients may ask which foods to avoid during a course of treatment.
- Medical decision-making may involve extended family members.

- Family members may believe giving a patient bad news correlates with a decline in the patient's condition.
- Families may stay with a loved one in the hospital. Chinese families tend to be especially supportive during patient recovery; this support can help improve treatment adherence.

### Visiting the Home

- Arrive on time; latecomers may be considered rude.
- Ask if you should remove your shoes before you enter.
- Accept any food or drink offered to you. If you refuse, your host may extend the offer two or three times.
- Treat elderly people with great respect. Speak softly to them, and avoid disagreeing with them in conversation.

## Traditional Ideas and Beliefs About TB

### Common Causal Beliefs About TB

Patients may believe that tuberculosis could be a result of general poor health, or of a weak respiratory system. Some may attribute Tuberculosis to one or more of the following factors:

- Genetics
- 'Hot' (or yang) foods
- 'Dryness' in the body
- Fatigue or excessive work
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol in excess
- Exposure to dust or dirt
- Exposure to environmental pollutants
- Exposure to crowded places

While they may contribute to the development of TB, or to the transmission of TB, these items do not cause TB directly.

### Beliefs About TB Transmission

Some Chinese people, including patients, may believe that TB could be transmitted in one or more of the following ways:

- Sharing eating utensils with an infected person;
- Sharing food with an infected person.

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## Stigma and TB

Stigma and stigmatizing practices continue to exist; however, do not assume all Chinese patients and their families will believe the misperceptions listed here.

Persons from China may experience one or more of the following as a result of a TB diagnosis:

- stress
- a change in self-perception
- fear of isolation or social exile
- concerns about transmitting TB to others
- fear of job loss

Consequently, some patients may attempt to hide their diagnoses or to stop medical treatment.

- Patients with TB who are thin and pale could be considered 'dirty' or unattractive.
- Patients may be isolated from others by both family and community.
- Patients can be afraid to disclose a TB diagnosis to their friends or spouses.
- Patients may give an alias while at the clinic.

## Common Terms for TB

A Chinese person may refer to TB using the following words or phrases:

- 'terrible lung'
- consumptive disease
- 'lung consumption'
- 'lung overwork'
- 'lung tiredness'

## Treatment Considerations

### Traditional Beliefs

- Some believe disease may be caused by an imbalance of yin and yang. Yin and yang are considered by many to be the two essential elements of the universe: examples of this include male and female; hot and cold; positive and negative energy.
- People may also believe illness could be caused by spirits, inappropriate emotions, or taboo behaviors.
- According to some, staying healthy requires a person to follow the Chinese tradition of respecting parents and ancestors as an act of piety.

## Medication

- Some patients may avoid reporting symptoms or medication side effects.
- Some patients may take half doses of medications due to a belief that Western medicine could be too strong for a Chinese person; they may also stop taking prescribed medicines altogether.
- Some patients may expect immediate results from a treatment plan; they may also overconsume TB medications with the hope of getting well more quickly.
- Medication received by injection may be regarded as more effective than medication taken by mouth; pills may be considered more effective than liquid medications.

## Traditional Remedies

- Some Chinese patients and practitioners may classify Western medicines as 'hot', or yang.
- In traditional Chinese medicine, a 'hot' (or yang) illness is treated in part with 'cold' (or yin) foods; illnesses considered to be yin are treated with yang foods.
- Because tuberculosis is viewed as a yang illness, many traditional healers build treatment plans to address deficiencies in yin.
- Traditional treatments for TB may involve receiving acupuncture, practicing the traditional exercise t'ai-chi, and ingesting ginger or boiled pork lung, which is based on beliefs that the animal part will strengthen the same part of the human body.

## Traditional Healers

- Traditional Chinese medicine remains an important part of their healthcare system.
- Many hospitals employ traditional healers alongside Western practitioners; these teams often work together on treatment plans.
- Some Chinese people may believe that Western medications could cause imbalances in the body; patients may use traditional treatments to address this issue of imbalance.
- Patients may seek Western treatments for minor illnesses, like the common cold.
- They may choose a combination of traditional and Western medical treatments for illnesses such as tuberculosis, heart disease, or cancer.