



Aged Care Services

Working Effectively with the Chinese community

Issues

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

- Chinese elderly generally desire to know about aged care options in Australia. However, because of limited translated information, incorrect information from family or acquaintances, they are often confused about who to contact for aged care information.

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

- Many Chinese elderly are unable to read and comprehend information provided in English.
- They experience great difficulty at the first contact with service providers and lack confidence to contact the provider through the interpreter service.
- Because of the language barrier, the elderly are forced to rely on their family or others to communicate their needs with service providers. This is disempowering for them.

INTERGENERATIONAL ISSUES

- Many Chinese elderly are cared for by their children without external assistance and hence are not well informed of available aged care services.
- However, more Chinese elderly are now living alone and few of those expect to be looked after by their children .

VALUES AND CULTURAL ISSUES

- Traditionally, most families wish to care for their elderly at home and prefer to carry out their duty/responsibilities as long as they can.
- A Chinese family may feel ashamed or fear “losing face” in their community if they receive external assistance to care for their ageing parents. They also are apprehensive about costs and lack trust in service providers.
- There is a fear of disclosing private information.
- Some feel gratitude for what they have already received and reluctant to ask for more.

What to do?

- ✓ Develop relationships with Chinese senior clubs to conduct information sessions using an interpreter and provide bilingual information.
- ✓ Facilitate guided tours of your service.
- ✓ Provide bilingual information about services to Chinese speaking GP's.

- ✓ Identify language/dialect & literacy level of your client; do not assume literacy in their own language.
- ✓ Use Chinese speaking workers when possible.
- ✓ Promote services in Chinese media. eg. Newspapers (Australian Chinese Daily , Sing Tao Newspaper) or Chinese radio programs(SBS,3CW,3ZZZ)
- ✓ Offer telephone and on-site interpreting services if required.
- ✓ Arrange your first meeting directly with your client, explaining the purpose of the visit, using the telephone interpreter when necessary.
- ✓ If client is illiterate in their language, providing information face to face, is preferable.

- ✓ Invite family members and carers to attend aged care information sessions and guided tours of your facility.
- ✓ Do not assume every Chinese elderly is well supported by their family.
- ✓ Provide ongoing education to the whole Chinese community (young & old) to promote greater acceptance of aged care services within Chinese families.

- ✓ Inform your client of their rights and responsibilities in relation to your services' in their own language.
- ✓ Provide information about the service to be delivered and fees and standards to expect.
- ✓ Provide matching gender and cultural background of the client and worker.
- ✓ Provide cultural awareness training to staff including front –line workers.
- ✓ Identify and develop links with Chinese agencies and groups who provide professional support to Chinese communities, to exchange expertise and referrals.

The DO's and DONT'S OF HOME VISITS

- Greet with a gentle nod and smile or handshake. Avoid physical contact with women.
- Greet the oldest, or head of the family before any others .
- Traditionally, Chinese surnames are placed first, followed by their given name, which may have one or two syllables. For “Chang Guo Jing,” “Chang” is the surname, “Guo Jing” is the given name. Address clients by surname and appropriate titles such as Mr.Chang / Mrs.Lee to convey respect. Unless specifically asked, do not call Chinese people by given name.
- Most Chinese women retain their maiden names after marriage, but may indicate marital status by using Mrs., Ms., or Madam. For example, Mrs. Tan might be married to Mr. Chong. However, because some Chinese people may address themselves as ‘Mrs. (husband’s family name)’, it is wise to ask your female client for their preferred name at the beginning of the visit.
- Some of the gestures that are taboo in China include pointing the index finger, using index finger to call someone and finger snapping. Use open hand instead.
- Speak clearly and slowly, but do not raise your voice.
- Learn a few Chinese words and expressions to assist in building rapport with your clients.
- Objects that are offered by both hands should be taken by both hands as a sign of respect. Hand a brochure or business card by both hands directly to the client, not just down on the table.
- It is polite to accept drink or food that is offered. It is Chinese custom to serve a guest refreshments.
- Punctuality is one of the many ways of ‘keeping face’. Always try to be on time.
- Chinese people seldom display emotions: kissing or embracing in public is not appropriate.
- Do not presume every Chinese person present at your client’s home, is a family member; they may be neighbours or friends. Clarify with your client if it is appropriate to discuss their needs with others present.
- Do not make judgments or decide on an action-plan before listening to all parties involved.
- Explain the boundaries of your role and your organisation early in your communication. Do not make promises that cannot be kept.
- Be patient when you listen to a Chinese person and try not to interrupt or finish their sentence.
- Negative answers are regarded as impolite. Avoid saying ‘no’ , answer ‘maybe’ or ‘I’ll think about it’, and get into the details later.
- Be aware that a client may avoid giving a direct answer to a question they see as confronting. Chinese people seldom raise their objections to confronting questions. Observe the body language of your client.If client smiles and politely says ‘No big problem’, this usually means ‘There are some problems.’ Try to identify any potential problems.
- Avoid making appointments with a family for a few weeks, after the death of a family member.
- Chinese people don’t usually regard counselling and emotional support as sufficient or practical solutions.
- Provide your business card at the end of the meeting.