

## Barriers for Chinese American Immigrants Seeking Emergency Care

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According to the 2006 American Community Survey data, more than 1.6 million foreign born from China reside in the US. While the overall quality of health care in Chinese Immigrant shows progress, continuing to improve the health care remains an issue for this population.

Emergency health care is referred as medical care for an illness or injury that is needed right away from a doctor's office, or emergency room. Significant barriers exist for access emergency health care for Chinese immigrants.

Language remains a major barrier to access emergency health care. Nearly two thirds of the Chinese immigrants are limited in English language. Poor language skills limit the Chinese immigrants' understanding of US health care system; limit opportunity to sign up for government sponsored health insurance; limit the ability to call for help for emergency health care; limit understanding of the disease and treatment options. Poor language proficiency also limit the immigrants' understanding of their legal right. Many Chinese immigrants refuse to access needed emergency health care due to fear of being exiled or denied for immigration application. Alternative healthcare beliefs can be a barrier for Chinese

immigrants to access emergency health care. Many Chinese immigrants believe in the superiority of traditional Chinese medicine over western medicine and therefore delay the process of seeking needed emergency medical care. Traditionally, Chinese tend to rely on family members and friends for advice, include advice on health conditions. The lack of close contact with friends and family members and possible inaccurate assessment of health status may delay an immigrant to seek medical care. Despite the significant improvement of the Chinese immigrants' economic status, many of them still live in poverty. Lack of economic support prevents these immigrants from seeking emergency health care. Other factors such as age, marital status, gender, lack of social support for new immigrants, lack of transportation may also delay or prevent one seeking emergency health care.

Different barriers exist before, during, and after the emergency health care visits. Health care professionals have the responsibility to understand the problems, help solve the problem, educate the public, and promote health care and the health of the community. Different health care disciplines such as medicine and nursing should work together to improve the health care of Chinese immigrants.