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Abstract
Traditional Chinese healthcare places emphasis on disease prevention as well as holistic treatment of disease (Rothstein & Rajapaska, 2003). Holistic intervention encompasses a variety of mental and physical treatments in order to overcome disease and promote wellness. This study attempted to decipher some of the beliefs surrounding health and illness in modern China, as well as investigate how these attitudes influence preventive measures, treatment, and health-advancing behaviors. Interviews were conducted in Beijing, China. Participants were questioned about a variety of topics including health promoting techniques, daily health practices, and the type of treatment sought in cases of illness. Traditional Chinese medical beliefs regarding illness prevention and health promotion were integrated with Western medicine, which was used for the treatment of disease and symptom recovery. Traditional beliefs, such as the importance of maintaining a healthy diet and a balanced lifestyle, were built into the practices of lay individuals.
Traditional Wellness Practices in Contemporary Chinese Society:  
A Holistic Approach to Health and Illness

Health and illness are conceptualized differently throughout the world and are thought to have various etiologies depending on cultural context. Many health beliefs have evolved with the passage of time yet remain rooted in historical tradition. For example, before the Han dynasty in China (206 BCE-220 CE), sickness was frequently attributed to evil spirits or evil wind that was believed to take possession of the human soul. Exorcism, drugs, and charms were thought to serve curative purposes and were used to ward off attacks from evil. Children were seen as particularly vulnerable to illness because they were thought to be weakly anchored to their souls. Today less emphasis is placed on supernaturally caused disorders in China; however, most modern Chinese medical texts continue to recognize the origin of their existence. There is evidence that traditional Chinese values influence the shaping of beliefs and practices regarding personal health maintenance (Chan, Cheung, Mok, Cheung, & Tong, 2005; McLaughlin, 1998).

Foundations of Chinese medicine

Chinese medicine is not wholly indigenous but has received influence from countries such as India, Tibet, and central and South-east Asia (Porter, 1997). For instance, it has been proposed that blood-letting and the needling techniques from which acupuncture was derived may have stemmed from central Asian shamanic curing practices. Buddhist charms came from India, as well as beliefs about the soul and salvation which initiated care for the debilitated and allowed the needy to find assistance and treatment in monastic hospitals (Porter, 1997). Many of the medicinal elements in
Chinese medicine were introduced or imported from abroad; ginseng from Korea, musk from Tibet, cardamom and cloves from South-east Asia, and saffron, frankincense and myrrh from Persia and Arabia. Over time, various elements from different cultural traditions have been assimilated into Chinese medical theory (Porter, 1997).

China became politically unified in 221 BCE. With unification came the foundation of a political, philosophical and cosmological orthodoxy (Porter, 1997). This period brought about the emergence of the Huang Di Nei Jing or the Yellow Emperor’s Class of Internal Medicine, the earliest systematic Chinese medical text. The text constitutes the theoretical basis of traditional medicine in China. It describes the physiology and pathology of the human body, and promotes the diagnosis and treatment of disease through the theories of yin and yang and the five material elements of water, fire, metal, wood, and earth (Perkins, 1999). The Huang Di Nei Jing discusses the medicinal value of food as well as the concept of a balanced and complete diet (Ho, 1993). The Huang Di Nei Jing considers the nourishment of both the body and the mind, emphasizing the idea that herbal medicine and food have similar origins. Diet was seen as essential to the prevention of disease and viewed as a superior form of treatment (Ho, 1993).

Etiology of illness

According to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), the body functions like a small universe with a set of complete interconnected systems that work in harmony to maintain healthy functioning of the entire body. TCM proposes that every individual is composed of qi or ‘life energy.’ When the body lacks an adequate supply of qi, or the flow of qi is blocked, the body is unable to maintain harmony. This lack of order results in illness.
Disease can arise not only from an imbalance within the individual, but also from an imbalance in the relationship the individual has with the surrounding environment. Both internal and external factors are believed to disrupt the body's qi. Traditional Chinese medical theory states that disease is classified based on external causes, internal causes, and causes that are neither internal nor external. External causes of pathology are broken into six atmospheric or climatic forces including wind, cold, summer heat, dampness, dryness, and fire. Internal causes of disease make reference to seven emotions including joy, thought, anxiety, sorrow, fear, fright, and anger. Anger, joy, thought, sorrow, and fear are referred to as the 'five minds,' and each of these minds corresponds to one of the five organs (the liver, heart, spleen, lungs, or kidneys), which in turn corresponds to one of the five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, water). Fatigue and food are additional causes of illness and are classified as neither internal nor external (Flaws & Lake, 2001).

Philosophies of Chinese medicine: Yin-yang and the five elements (wu xing)

TCM understands the normal and abnormal processes of the body through the configuration of universal characteristics of yin and yang and the five elements (Porter, 1997). The traditional Daoist perspective views health as a point of equilibrium between the human body and the natural world, and a balance among the various aspects within the body (Perkins, 1999). Nature or 'the Dao' is seen as a unified system and has polar and complementary aspects referred to as yin and yang (Beinfield & Korngold, 1991). Yin and yang are a symbolic way of defining opposite forces at work in the universe and in the body; every living organism is sustained by a balance of yin and yang. TCM uses
the principle of *yin* and *yang* to describe the functions of the body's organs and organ systems, illnesses and conditions, and treatments.

The *yin-yang* model represents the interaction of opposing forces while the five phase theory further distinguishes these forces into the relationship between five elements which divides the continuum of movement into stages (Beinfield & Korngold, 1991). TCM philosophy proposes that all phenomena can be categorized within the boundaries of five elements: fire, earth, metal, water, and wood. These natural elements are believed to correspond to the main organs of the body, demonstrating the interrelationship between all phenomena. Fire is associated with the heart, metal with the lungs, earth with the spleen, water with the kidneys, and wood with the liver. Medicinal herbs are also classified into five tastes: sweet, salty, bitter, pungent and sour, and correspond to the five elements (Beinfield & Korngold, 1991). For instance, the skin is considered a metal element *yang* organ; thus, a problem with the skin would be treated by using pungent herbs.

*Traditional treatment*

Practitioners of TCM do not treat a patient’s specific symptoms, but rather focus on how healing can be achieved by examining how harmony can be restored in the body (Porter, 1997). Various techniques are utilized to assist the body in its own healing process. Some of the primary treatment methods include acupuncture, moxibustion, herbal medicine, and dietary therapy (Barbaso-Schwartz, 2004). These methods are thought to bring the forces of *yin* and *yang* into balance, allowing energy to flow freely throughout the body. Acupuncture is used to regulate the flow of *qi* through the insertion of thin needles at points along the meridian pathways of the body through which *qi* is
thought to flow. Acupuncture is believed to correct any imbalance, excess, deficiency, or lack of fluidity in the flow of \textit{qi} (Barbaso-Schwartz, 2004). Acupuncture and moxibustion, the burning of mugwort on the surface of the body, are used concurrently. Moxibustion is believed to have an invigorating effect on the body and is used to augment \textit{qi} (Beinfield & Korngold, 1991). Herbal medicines derived from plants are aimed at restoring the balance in the body (Perkins, 1999). Similar to herbal medicine, food is believed to hold medicinal value and is used to correct imbalances of \textit{yin} and \textit{yang}. Food is thought to affect the internal body as well as the energy surrounding the body; what one eats can either protect and rebalance one’s body, or contaminate one’s systems. One example of basic preventive care, based on the principle of \textit{yin} and \textit{yang} is to adjust the diet according to the season. In summer, individuals are encouraged to include cooling \textit{yin} foods into their diet, such as leafy vegetables or fruit; in winter, warming \textit{yang} foods such as root vegetables or seeds, are believed necessary for health (Jilin & Peck, 1995).

Traditional Chinese beliefs have emphasized the relationship between food and health. Chinese culture highlights the proper selection of foods and the timing of meals as means to direct energy (\textit{qi}) and improve health. A study conducted by Koo (1984) discovered that proper selection, timing, and food preparation was a traditional method used by contemporary Chinese individuals living in Hong Kong to prevent and treat common symptoms and illnesses. Participants also used food to maintain homeostasis within the body, a concept pertinent to TCM. In an additional study, Satia-Abouta, Patterson, Kristal, Teh, & Tu (2002) found that Chinese participants living in North America believed that a strong relationship existed between diet and health. The participant’s older relatives and spouses tended to prefer a Chinese diet, which influenced
the entire household diet. Participants who experienced normative pressure to maintain Chinese eating patterns were found to consume more fruit and vegetables. From these studies researchers concluded that participants continued to adhere to traditional cultural beliefs emphasizing the importance of food as means to health maintenance and promotion.

*Western versus Eastern approach to health*

The biomedical model stands as the dominant way of addressing and treating pathology in the Western world. This model emphasizes the physical state of the body in both health and illness, and it proposes that diseases and physical disorders can be explained by disturbances in physiological processes. For example, disease is thought to result from injury, biochemical imbalances, bacterial or viral infection. The biomedical model views the body as an entity separate from the psychological and social processes of the mind, and it assumes that disease is primarily an affliction of one’s body (Lu, 2002). Although this approach remains dominant in Western cultures, a variety of other models for conceptualizing health are prevalent and used by people of different societies (Jovchelovitch & Gervais, 1999).

TCM is the most commonly practiced system of non-western medicine in the world today and holds views that differ from Western medicine (Flaws & Lake, 2001). The dualism between the body and mind does not exist in TCM but holds a holistic view of the body and of health and illness. Because there is no separation, the psyche and soma are granted equivalent status and treatment (Flaws & Lake, 2001). The Chinese holistic model stresses the importance of homeostasis in the mind and body as well as in the individual’s social, spiritual and natural environment (Lu, 2002). Rather than focusing on
how to treat a specific illness, TCM functions to promote health and prevent health problems from occurring in the future.

*Chinese conceptualizations of chronic illness*

Researchers have noted that although diseases and symptoms may be identical, they can be viewed differently by individuals of separate cultures. A plethora of studies have been conducted using Chinese individuals living in western countries as the standard sample population in investigating personal health issues. These studies have attempted to identify traditional Chinese beliefs about disease, and to determine whether these attitudes are maintained or assimilated in order to fit into the new culture’s health perceptions and practices. Such research has shown that representations of health and illness do tend to be grounded in cultural frameworks which are constructed through communication, social interaction and the practices of daily life. One particular study found that regardless of Western acculturation, Chinese individuals living in England shared a common perspective of health and illness (Jovchelovitch & Gervais, 1998). A majority of the research conducted on health has focused on the beliefs of Chinese individuals with chronic diseases.

*Alzheimer’s disease.* Perceptions, beliefs, values, and feelings relating to Alzheimer’s disease are found to vary among ethnic groups. A study conducted by Jones, Chow, and Gatz (2004) examined the factors that shape Asian-American’s attitudes towards Alzheimer’s disease. Researchers found that participant’s beliefs regarding Alzheimer’s disease were influenced by folk wisdom and culturally acceptable truths as well as scientific information. For instance, among Chinese participants, a strong
emphasis was placed on the role of food and diet in Alzheimer’s disease, and eating
habits which were thought to constitute symptoms of the disorder (Jones et al., 2005).

*Cancer.* Yeo, Meiser, Barlow-Stewart, Goldstein, Tucker, and Eisenbruch (2004)
investigated whether the Chinese cultural meaning of cancer would act as a potential
barrier to the access of cancer services for Chinese-Australians. Although many
participants held Western biomedical explanations for cancer, a majority of the
participants maintained traditional Chinese beliefs. These traditional explanations of
illness referred to ideas regarding karma, retribution, fate, *feng shui*, evil, misfortune or
bad luck, offending the gods or deities requiring prayers or offerings for appeasement,
and spells invoked through human intervention.

Similarly, Liang, Yuan, Mandelblatt, and Pasick (2004) studied a group of
Chinese-American women in order to better comprehend their perceptions of health and
illness and their knowledge about cancer. Researchers discovered that participants
maintained traditional Chinese beliefs as they viewed activities such as outdoor exercise
in the morning for fresh air, and a hot-cold balanced diet as central ways of achieving
health. None of the participants mentioned the importance of regular medical check-ups
or cancer screening as prevention techniques. Researchers suggested that participants
neglect in mentioning check-ups or screening may have been related to the fatalistic
attitude that many of the participants held when they discussed the notion of cancer
prevention.

Contrary to Chinese cultural beliefs regarding cancer, a study using Caucasian
Canadian women found that participants tended to associate breast cancer with family
history, a high fat diet, breast injury, being over 50 years old, oral contraceptive use, and
hormone replacement therapy (Perrault, Shedden & Billey, 1994 as cited in Simpson, 2005). These beliefs were very distinct from Chinese individual’s beliefs regarding breast cancer; Ashing, Padilla, Tejero, and Kagawa-Singer (2003) found that Chinese women felt that stress could act as a potential cause of cancer. Participants also believed that dietary restrictions could help control their illness, and that family support, spirituality, and mental control were important aspects in their battle against cancer. Similar to Liang et al.’s (2004) findings, Ashing et al. (2003) discovered that many of the Chinese participants held a fatalistic attitude toward cancer prevention. This recurring finding is crucial as it illustrates the influence that individual beliefs can have on health behaviors and practices.

Recognizing that beliefs play an important role in health practices, a study conducted by Chui, Donoghue, and Chenoweth (2005) sought to shed light on the impact that Chinese culture has on Chinese-Australian’s overall experience of advanced cancer. The key aspects of Chinese culture, used by participants in their battle against cancer included the utilization of TCM, traditional Chinese beliefs regarding the use of food for health maintenance purposes, qi gong, feng shui, and the worship of ancestors and gods. Researchers determined that the beliefs and practices associated with TCM, the philosophy of harmony, the balance of yin and yang, and qi serve as defining features of Chinese culture, and ultimately influenced Chinese-Australians psychosocial experience of cancer.

How beliefs regarding chronic illness affect behaviors

Health beliefs influence the behaviors that individuals engage in as well as the type of treatments that they will seek out (Helman, 1984 as cited in Anderson, Wiggins,
Rajwani, Holbrook & Blue, 1995). Research has suggested that one’s cultural background assists in the differentiation of help-seeking patterns among patients suffering from various disorders. Specifically, health beliefs are crucial in guiding the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral strategies that are adopted when negotiating the experience of chronic illness (Simpson, 2005). For instance, researchers found that the sense of fatalism that Asian-American women associated with chronic illness contributed to the women being passive, rather than proactive, in seeking out medical care on their own. Medical care and attention were often delayed due to beliefs that the lack of symptoms or pain implies good health. In addition, Asian women relied on both western medicine and TCM (such as shark fin and herbs) for treatment and many depended on word of mouth rather than recommendations from doctors (Ashing et al., 2003). Such findings support the notion that unique social and cultural differences exist among the way in which ethnic groups in manage chronic illness. A study conducted by Chan, Cheung et al. (2006) explored how Chinese adults in Hong Kong understood the meaning of health and the ways in which participants constructed and expressed these meanings in their daily lives. Researchers found that the significance of Confucian teachings, an Eastern view of self, and a western biomedical orientation were found to be several primary features of participants’ concepts as well as their expressions of health. It is apparent that cultural factors shape beliefs regarding health, and that these beliefs influence health behavior and the decisions made about medical care. Some researchers have argued that more emphasis should be placed on cultural conceptualizations of health and illness, and less emphasis on the patient’s symptoms and pathology as a “biomedical reality” (Anderson et al., 1995).
The current study

The previous studies have attempted to shed light on the health attitudes and behaviors of Asian individuals. The focus of this line of research is on elucidating Chinese health beliefs and identifying possible barriers to medical care. The number of Chinese immigrants living in the United States is continually increasing and for this reason researchers are interested not only in how notions of health and illness are constructed by different communities of people, but also how these cultural definitions affect the delivery of healthcare (Jovchelovitch & Gervais, 1999). For this reason, researchers have focused on the Chinese population living in the United States or other Western countries in order to identify the potential degree of assimilation that takes place in Chinese health attitudes over time. In addition, many of these studies have focused on gaining an understanding of the health beliefs and practices of individuals with chronic disease.

The current study attempts to delve deeper into health attitudes and behaviors of modern, mainland Chinese by addressing related issues that have not been the focus of past work. Through the investigation of the health rituals of Chinese lay individuals living in China, the present study attempts to provide a greater understanding of wellness. Rather than focusing on pathology, this study takes into consideration the notion of health, and more specifically is concerned with how traditional Chinese culture influences Chinese health beliefs and practices. The important roles of psychological and sociological factors in health and illness are considered in this study, following the World Health Organization conceptualization of health, which identifies 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease.
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and infirmity’ (Lu, 2002, p. 180). This definition stresses the significance, as well as the need to attain a more complete understanding of individual’s concepts of health. This study seeks to explore the beliefs and daily health practices of individuals living in China as a product of cultural factors; within this realm, diet, exercise, illness prevention measures, as well as health promotion, and the type of medical care used are investigated.

Method

Participants

Twenty-four Chinese individuals, residing in Beijing, China were interviewed about their personal health beliefs and behaviors (see Table 1 for participants’ demographic information). Participants varied widely in age ranging from 19-54 years, though half of the subjects were University students (between the ages of 18-22). Eight of the participants were male and sixteen were female. Twenty-two of the participants were recruited through the process of snowball sampling; initial interviews were conducted with Chinese friends and acquaintances. The next series of interviews were conducted with the friends, family, and neighbors of the original contacts. The remaining interviewees were individuals who became aware of this study by word of mouth. Most of these individuals were students at Tsinghua University and Beijing Foreign Studies University, interested in participating for the purpose of practicing their English speaking skills. Eight of the participants who volunteered to be interviewed were compensated for their time and participation. Compensation varied and was based on the cultural appropriateness of the situation; it was usually some type of food item such as fruit, candy, or boxed tea. Non-university students were most frequently compensated because they were generally non-English speakers and did not receive the benefit of practicing
their English speaking skills. In addition, these interviews took place in their homes and often took longer because a translator was necessary.

**Interview Protocol**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in either Mandarin or English depending on the interviewee's level and knowledge of the English language. The typical interview length lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. Seven interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese with a Chinese-English translator present. Cognizant of the language barrier and difficulty in translating Chinese concepts that do not have identical English translation or meaning, interview questions were written using simple English words and phrases. Six of the eighteen interviews that were conducted in English were audio-taped. Participant's comfort was a main priority, and the first participants interviewed were asked beforehand whether they objected to having the interview tape recorded. It was discovered that many felt uncomfortable with being taped and the remaining interviews were not audio-taped. In addition, it was difficult to tape record the interviews that were conducted in public places because of the level of background noise. Hand written notes were taken at the time of each interview. These notes not only contained interviewee responses but also incorporated personal observations. Notes were typed and transcribed every few days.

The setting of the interview varied depending on the participant being interviewed. For instance, interviews with university students took place in a dormitory setting. For the remaining participants, interviews took place in their home or at a public place in Beijing (such as a park or coffee shop). All but four of the interviews occurred in the presence of others. Especially among the non-college age participants, families and
spouses tended to interview together. For example, one couple was interviewed in which
the husband answered all of the interview questions first, and the wife interviewed
directly after him. There were several times when the individual who was not being
interviewed would add an additional comment or talk with the person being interviewed;
however, most of the time interviewees remained silent while their spouse or friend was
interviewing. This procedure actually helped to maintain a relaxed interviewing
atmosphere as participants felt more like they were having an informal discussion than
being formally interviewed.

The format of the interview questions was based on a funnel approach to
interviewing (http://www.roguecom.com/interview). The first several questions covered
broad areas relating to health and illness, and the questions became increasingly more
specific as the interview progressed. For instance, the first question asked participants to
define health and illness from a personal standpoint, while the last question asked
subjects to describe the Chinese diet and whether they adhered to such a diet in their own
lives. Questions were designed to gain an understanding of the attitudes that Chinese
individuals living in Beijing hold about personal health and wellbeing. The questions also
attempted to gain insight into the types of behaviors and practices that lay individuals
seek out in order to promote a healthy life style and prevent disease (see Table 2 for
detailed list of questions). After the interview was completed, participants were asked
whether they had any additional information that they would like to add or anything they
would like to know about the study in general. This was often the time that participants
added personal anecdotes that had not previously fit into the structure of the interview.

Results
Results are presented below and are grouped into categories representing the key themes that emerged from interviewee responses (see appendix 1 for transcribed interviews). Participant comments are noted by the gender and number of the participant (e.g. first female is identified as F1).

**Category 1: Holistic conceptualizations of health and illness**

Twenty-one of the 24 participants defined health in terms of an integration between the physical body and the emotional mind. For instance, F5 reported that there is both physical and mental health to consider, and "if either one of them is lost you are not healthy." Another participant defined physical health as "feeling well" and mental health as "being happy and not having worries" (F11). F16 grouped both physical and mental health into a single definition, stating that health is "being in a happy mood and having no sickness."

Ten of the participants defined illness holistically, using both physical and mental aspects to describe pathology. M6 felt that "illness is when you get a disease, but also when you are not in a good mood." Similarly, M8 said that illness is both psychological and physical: "psychological illness is being narrow minded or envying others" while physical illness is "easily becoming ill. For example, catching a cold or having a cough." F6 described illness as "either your interior or exterior is ill. If they [individuals] are internally ill they may have performed wrong deeds and suffer from within." F10 reported that physical illness is when "you don’t feel good and there is something wrong with your body and you must see the doctor." She defined mental illness as "when you feel unhappy or depressed; something is wrong with your mind." Both physical and mental states of illness were thought to be interrelated, functioning together to form
pathology. For example, M3 stated that "a bad mood can lead to illness. A person's psychological health can affect their physical health. One is especially weak when in a bad mood." Gender and age differences in the way that participants defined health and illness were not evident. Rather, the answers were relatively homogenous. The participants who did not provide holistic definitions of health or illness gave less descriptive definitions of these terms such as "health is when I feel full of energy" (F2) and "if you are not healthy you are sick" (M2).

Category 2: Causes of illness

Participants reported that both exogenous and endogenous factors cause illness. For instance, F11 said "the environment, such as heat and pollution, can make a person sick. Also, a person's mood can affect their health. If they can't express themselves they may feel depressed." M7 reported that serious illnesses such as cancer "can be caused by an unbalanced lifestyle such as too much pressure, pollution from the environment, or an individual's genes." M4 felt that there were three things that caused illness: "irregular diet, lack of sleep, and lack of or too much exercise. People that eat food that tastes good but is not nutritious will become ill." M4 also thought that "pollution and pesticides in the environment play a role [in the development of illness]. And that a person must have good habits in order to have good health, and a regular schedule."

The latter part of the previous quote was consistent with another theme that emerged when interviewing participants about the perceived causes of illness; this was the belief that disease is often caused by inconsistent habits or irregular routines. F4 noted that DNA, as well as an "unhealthy lifestyle" are causes of illness. Similarly, F16 said that "illness can be caused by irregular habits or a bad diet" and F13 responded that
illness is due to “an unwholesome life; eating a big dinner one day and eating no dinner the next for example.” These responses stress the importance that respondent’s placed on incorporating a healthy routine into their everyday life.

In addition to the beliefs about the potential causes of illness, several of the participants stressed the idea that serious illness could be prevented by combining a variety of health practices, such as having a healthy diet or regular exercise routine. Cancer was used most frequently as an example of a chronic illness that was believed to be preventable. The participants who discussed prevention were primarily older, non-university students. For instance, F16 (age 54) reported that a lack of exercise causes illness, and “proper living habits are necessary [to prevent disease]. It is important to pay attention to your diet. You shouldn’t be lazy and must use your brain often. In order to prevent things such as cancer, heart disease, or more serious illness you must have a high spirit and lots of energy.” F14 (age 49) reported that having an unhealthy diet, not getting enough exercise, and becoming angry can cause illnesses like cancer. M7 (age 25) believed that cancer was caused by an unbalanced lifestyle, too much pressure, pollution from the environment, or an individual’s genes.

Interestingly, in addition to M7, only three other participants mentioned the role of genetics in the development of illness. For example, F3 felt that both genetics and things that happen after you are born in the environment, such as unpleasant experiences” cause illness. F4 reported that “a person’s DNA and unhealthy lifestyle” cause a person to become ill. F16 stated that “serious diseases maybe caused by genetics or by the environment.”

**Category 3: Importance of health**
All twenty-four of the participants expressed that their personal health was very important for them. For instance, F12 stated “health is a basic need. If you are unhealthy you can’t do the things you want to do. You can’t go out and you cannot communicate instead you must stay in your room.” F13 responded that “health is number one. Other things such as fame or power are zero. They are meaningless without health.” F15 believed “not having health is equivalent to not having life.” M7 said of health, “you have to survive. For living a better life you need to enjoy yourself. Health is the most important aspect of a person’s life.”

Several of the participants felt that health was important because it was tied to their relationships and their community. F4 clearly summarized this idea when she reported that “health is necessary because it is the basis of all kinds of social activities. You need health to survive.” F9 discussed health as being important because without it she would not be able to assist others. She said “healthy people can fulfill a lot of things. Having both a healthy body and mind are needed to support people.” F6 said “if you are healthy you can make others around you feel good. Otherwise they fuss over you when you are sick. F7 mentioned that she could not have a happy family life unless she was in good health.

Linked to the belief that being healthy is necessary in order to support others, F14 reported that it is “less of a burden to society and ones family if they [individuals] are in good health.” The idea that a sick or unhealthy individual was a burden to others was related to the belief that in order to work one must be in good health, which many of the participants touched upon in their responses. It is evident that participants equated one’s ability to work with being useful to society. F18 said “if you don’t feel well and you have
no energy and you can’t work you feel miserable.” F14 felt that in order for a person to have a good job and be able to work, one must be healthy. F15 indirectly mentioned the relationship between good health and the ability to work when she said “money and status do not exist without health.”

Category 4: Health promotion and illness prevention

When participants were asked to describe the beliefs they had regarding how to prevent illness, many immediately mentioned the role of diet. As a follow up question, participants were asked whether they believed that certain foods could protect them from becoming ill. Fourteen of the participants mentioned the importance of diet and listed specific foods that could be used for prevention purposes. M4 stated that “Chinese people use food to cure disease. Taking vitamins, eating ginger, and boiling leeks in water can cure a cold.” F4 reported that “food can cure disease better than medicine,” and F2 felt that “food can be helpful. In the summer you should avoid certain meat and only eat certain types of food.” F5 discussed the significance that having a balanced diet plays in promoting positive health. She stated that “a person should eat nutritiously and they should not eat too much or too little.”

The overall theme of balance, as a necessary component of well-being, was illustrated through diet. Specifically, eight of the participants mentioned the importance of maintaining balance in one’s diet. M5 discussed most in depth the traditional Chinese beliefs about harmony in diet, and in one’s life in general. He stated that “according to traditional rules, a person should change their lifestyle depending on the seasons.” He continued that “humans should change their food, drinks, clothes, and even colors of clothing to be consistent with the nature and the universe... In the summer one should eat bitter food to defeat the fire within the body because summer is so hot. Spicy or warm
food is needed in the winter. Sour tastes in the fall are necessary.” Other participants did not stress the importance of abiding by traditional rules, but tended to emphasize the importance of following a set routine in regard to diet. Both F7 and F11 reported that not only having a balanced diet, but also having meals on time were crucial in the prevention of illness. Similarly, F12 advocated the belief that a regular schedule such as “running every morning and eating a regular diet” was necessary to keep from getting sick.

Many participants described specific foods they believed were either necessary to improve their current state of health or assisted in the prevention of illness. There was agreement among eleven of the participants who felt that eating a diet high in fruit and vegetables, and avoiding too much meat and fried foods were important for promoting health. M6 said, “Every day I eat an apple or watermelon which I think can prevent me from getting sick.” F14 stated that “green food, like fruits and vegetables and vegetarian food are important.” She continued that “not eating meat, only occasionally eating meat, or replacing meat with seafood, were essential for keeping healthy.”

Participants reported that a diet high in fruit and vegetables and low in meat and fried foods was considered healthy. However, it should also be noted that participants listed a wide variety of foods and that there was little overlap between the specific types of foods that participants felt were essential for health. For instance, F13 said that “there are specific kinds of foods that can prevent certain diseases; for example, any kind of animal liver and mushrooms,” while F6 reported that “soymilk and tofu prevent cancer.” F6 also believed that “putting honey in water is good for you.” F8 stated that “Chinese red sugar prevents illness, especially menstrual cramps. If a person comes down with a cold they should boil water and ginger together and drink it.” F16 reported that “many
people stop eating fried foods because they want to have a better diet...Fried foods can cause certain diseases.” She believed that mushrooms could be used for cancer prevention, as “they can also reduce the thickness of the blood. Eating lots of fruit and vegetables and less meat is also good for health.” F5 not only mentioned the role of diet in prevention of physical disease, stating that “mushrooms, grain and fiber can get rid of toxins in your gut. Radish can stop gas and bloating. Vegetables such as zucchini are good for your health and can make you urinate,” she also mentioned that emotional or mental illness is preventable as well. She stated that “seeds of the lotus flower can help you with anxiety. Boiling roses and drinking them in hot water can prevent both anxiety and depression as well as purify the skin.” Although there was minimal consensus among participants regarding the kind of foods to use, it was evident that incorporating certain kinds of foods while avoiding others was crucial to health.

Category 5: Integration of Western and TCM practices

From the interviewee responses, it is evident that Chinese individuals today use a combination of Western and traditional Chinese approaches to treat illness and promote health. For example, F7 said that “Chinese traditional medicine as well as taking aspirin is effective [in treating sickness].” Participants mentioned a variety of Chinese and western health promoting activities that could be performed without the help of the doctor. F5 stated that “before going to the doctor I may do massage, guasha (“coin scraping,” in which a ceramic soup spoon or large coin is rubbed along pressure points allowing the flow of blood and the release of toxins), and bagua” (applying heated cups on areas of the body). M4 discussed the effect that self massage has on increasing the circulation in the body and benefiting one’s health. F5 reported that “I will stop work and
take a hot shower and do some head massaging and *guasha* [when sick]. If I have a high fever I use two fingers and pull the skin” (to increase circulation within the body).

Visiting the doctor was often viewed as a last resort. F1 summarized her reason for not going to the doctor when she said, “I don’t like to see a doctor because in China hospitals are for people with terrible illnesses. I don’t like taking medicine or pills, I believe instead that I should sleep. It can solve any problems.” F7 felt that it is too expensive to visit the doctor and many Chinese do not believe that their illness is serious enough to seek a doctor’s help. She continued that, “approximately 80% of Chinese don’t ever go to the doctor until it is too late. This is what happened to my grandmother who died of cancer.” F7 felt that as a consequence of not seeking out yearly physical exams, many Chinese were not conscious about their current condition of health.

When asked at what point they would seek help from a doctor utilizing either traditional Chinese or Western medicine, 16 of the participants mentioned that the health problem needed to be a severe or permanent issue. For instance, F6 said that “if the illness is serious or something that will affect me for the rest of my life I will see a Western doctor. If it is not serious- a sore throat, flu, or headache I will not see the doctor.” M3 reported that he would see a doctor only if the sickness “got out of hand.” Similarly, M1 stated that “I would wait a few days [to see a doctor] if I had the flu or a cold and I would rest.” From these responses, it was gathered that any illnesses that could be controlled without the help of the doctor (such as a cold, flu, and even diabetes) were less severe. For example, F5 said that although she had diabetes she did not view it as cause of concern. Rather, she stated that she monitored her sugar intake and took long walks at night in order to keep her disease under control. “As long as I can overcome an
illness on my own I will not see a doctor. I can cure myself if a disease comes infrequently,” she said.

Related to the finding that a doctor’s assistance was seen as necessary only in cases of severe illness participants also emphasized that they were rarely sick. This finding was consistent between both genders and among all ages. F16 said “because I am never sick there is no reason for me to see a doctor.” F6 said “I seldom go to the doctor because I don’t run into health problems. F9 stated “I must get a physical exam for school once a year. Otherwise, if I am not sick I don’t go to see the doctor.” F12 said, “I only sometimes see a doctor because I am very healthy. Once a year I maybe go to either a Chinese or Western doctor.” F7 said “I don’t go to the doctor if I can help it. In my family we don’t get sick very often.” Another reported “I am rarely sick. Maybe the last time I saw a doctor was in high school... I can’t remember. During my time at the university I have only got sick maybe 2 or 3 times and it is always only a small cold.” M5 stated that he was rarely ill which he attributed it to his daily meditation practice while F16 reported that “I am seldom ill because I am always very happy.”

When participants did visit the doctor, they reported seeing both practitioners of TCM and Western medicine. The type of doctor that participants sought help from in situations of illness was dependent upon the type of health problem that they were experiencing. Participants reported that they received help from TCM practitioners when they wanted to improve their health or treat an internal disorder (e.g. stomachache or headache), and sought a western medical doctor’s assistance when they wanted to treat the symptoms of a disorder. Many of the participants provided an explanation that was along similar lines to F5’s response, who reported visiting a Western doctor “only if I
was very sick. I would see a Chinese doctor if I want to make myself more healthy.” Similarly, F4 said “if the illness is serious or something that will affect me for the rest of my life I will see a Western doctor.” F4 continued to emphasize the different techniques utilized by a TCM and Western practitioner by stating that “Chinese medicine uses *guasha* which releases the fire and toxins from the body. Western doctors are able to conduct physical exams, take x-rays, or take blood tests.” M7 (a doctor himself, who primarily utilizes Western medicine, but also integrates TCM) said “if it is a problem with my heart I would see a Chinese doctor. If it is an infection I would take antibiotics the Western way… I mostly see a Western doctor. I sometimes see a Chinese doctor because they specialize in internal disease and some Western doctors can’t solve such problems- for example digestive problems.” Similar to the last response, F15 said, “I see a Western doctor about once a year for a physical exam. In my daily life, for minor problems, I see a Chinese doctor. For example, for stomach, leg, or waste aches, I see a Chinese doctor who gives me herbs and massage.”

From participant responses it was clear that participants were able to integrate Chinese and Western approaches to health into their daily practices. Most participants rarely visited the doctor but depended on a combination of Chinese and Western health measures that they were able to employ themselves. Although Chinese and Western medicine was used concurrently, participants stressed that a separation existed between the roles of Traditional Chinese and Western medicine in Chinese culture. Specifically, TCM was used in the prevention of disease while Western medicine was used in the treatment of disease.

Discussion
Previous research has focused primarily on the attitudes and behaviors of Chinese individuals with chronic illnesses (Jones et al., 2005; Yeo et al., 2004). Many of these studies have used Chinese participants no longer living in their native country as researchers have been interested in discovering whether traditional Chinese practices and beliefs regarding health remain constant or are assimilated upon arrival to a new culture. Such studies have repeatedly shown that representations of health and illness tend to be grounded in traditional Chinese cultural frameworks, although some assimilation of beliefs and practices do occur over time (Satia-Abouta et al., 2002; Jovchelovitch & Gervais, 1998).

A plethora of current research has focused on the way in which Chinese individuals conceptualize pathology. These studies provide insight into the type of healthcare practices in which Chinese individuals engage and have found that Chinese hold distinct views about pathology that differ from individuals of other cultures (Yeo et al., 2004). The difference in the way that diseases are conceptualized, and more specifically the beliefs that Chinese have about the causes of pathology are thought to shape one's overall psychosocial experience of illness (Chui et al., 2005). Ultimately, the type of health related activities, as well as the type of healthcare sought is influenced by basic underlying beliefs about the disease (Perrault et al., 1994; Simpson, 2005).

Understanding the influence that beliefs influence have on behaviors, researchers have investigated the implication this may for Chinese with chronic illness living in North America as well as in other Western countries. Recognizing that the Western biomedical system differs from traditional Chinese beliefs about health, researchers have
attempted to more precisely identify the types of barriers present between the different cultures.

The current study, through interviewing Chinese participants living in mainland China about their attitudes towards health as well as the types of health promoting behaviors in which they engaged, found several main themes from participant responses. First, participants did tend to think about the entire body, and included both the physical body and emotional mind in their definitions of health and illness. The second theme that emerged was the belief that a variety of external and internal factors cause pathology. Having an unhealthy diet was the most frequently cited factor responsible for illness. The third theme that developed was the value that participants placed on their personal health. Specifically, participants discussed a link between one’s health and the individual’s relationships with others. The fourth theme that was elicited from participant responses was in regard to their attitudes and ideas about health promotion. Diet was again mentioned as a significant element in disease control and prevention. Having a balanced diet and eating certain foods believed to have medicinal properties were seen as ways to prevent one from becoming sick. The final theme that surfaced was participant’s integration of TCM and western medicine into their healthcare regime, as interviewees mentioned seeing both traditional Chinese and Western practitioners and utilizing both traditional diet therapy and Western medicines.

The finding that participants mentioned both physical and mental aspects of well-being in their definitions of health and illness is consistent with research that supports the idea that, in general, Chinese think and process information more holistically than Americans (Hou, Zhu, & Peng, 2003). Previous research has found that a factor that
influences Chinese health cognitions is a holistic thinking style, which has an impact on how participants conceptualize and evaluate illness. The fact that participants included both physical and mental health when defining an overall state of health and illness was consistent with a study conducted Gany, Herrera, Avallone, & Changrani (2006). Researchers found that Chinese participants defined “being healthy” as being physical, mentally, and spiritually/ morally sound, and believed that a positive attitude helped in the prevention and aided in the recovery of illness. Similarly, an additional study conducted by Chan et al. (2004) found that Chinese living in Hong Kong tended to place emphasis on the interconnectedness of physical and psychological wellbeing in their overall definition of health.

Traditionally, emotions are thought to play a significant part in health and illness and the mind/body is “considered a circle of interaction between the internal organs and their emotional aspects” (Lu, 2002). Emotions are thought to cause disease when they become too intense, drawn out, are not expressed or not acknowledged (Simpson, 2005). Generally, Chinese place much more emphasis overall on mental or emotional components than the biomedical approach to conceptualizing health; the view that TCM holds of health and illness considers the mind and body as one. Therefore, it is possible that the way health and illness are conceptualized traditionally may influence how Chinese people today conceptualize health and illness today. Although participants reported their beliefs about the interview questions, only one of the participants discussed the origin of his beliefs, stating his familiarity with the “Yellow Emperor’s internal canon of medicine,” and the “I Qing,” upon which he stated that Chinese culture is based. He continued that humans should make changes to themselves and their surrounding
environment in order to be consistent with the nature and the universe, but “a lot of people don’t know this anymore and don’t follow this way of life.” It is possible that the remaining participants had knowledge about where their beliefs came from and either chose not to mention it, or else the language barrier kept them from expressing the information. Whatever the case, participants tended not to mention how or why they believed what they did. In the future, it may be beneficial to ask participants to assess their own beliefs, and where they felt these beliefs may have stemmed from.

Specifically, traditional medical theory classifies the causes of disease according to external causes, internal causes, and causes that are not internal or external. External causes refer to environmental forces, while internal causes refer to different emotions. Food is categorized as a cause that is neither internal nor external (Flaws & Lake, 2001). Participants mentioned a variety of external and internal factors that they felt were responsible for pathology which is consistent with traditional Chinese medical beliefs. These included pollution and temperature changes in the environment, pressure from society, one’s genetic makeup, and having an unhealthy lifestyle. Participant responses did parallel traditional Chinese medical beliefs regarding the etiology of illness. Most of the participants spoke about poor diet as a cause for disease and discussed the importance of having a balanced diet. It is possible that participant’s beliefs may have stemmed from traditional Chinese health beliefs regarding the role of diet. The *Huang Di Nei Jing* advocates that nourishment should be attained through the selection of appropriate foods. An “appropriate” amount of food meant not too much or too little, and referred to the incorporation of a variety of types of food (Ho, 1993). In addition, the emphasis that participants placed on diet is consistent with other research which has found that the use
of dietary modification in treatment and prevention of disease is a salient part of Chinese culture (Koo, 1984).

Many of the participants spoke about the belief that illness could be prevented by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This finding contrasted with research that has investigated the views of Chinese participants with chronic illness. Specifically, previous research has found that Chinese women with cancer hold a more fatalistic view of their disease (Liang, Yuan, Mandelblatt, Pasick, 2004). As only one participant discussed her experience with chronic illness (F5 reported having diabetes), it could be assumed that the remaining participants did not suffer from chronic illness. It is possible that the participants' lack of chronic illness influenced their beliefs about illness prevention, making them more likely to believe that illness can be avoided. Further, the interview question, 'what beliefs do you have on how to prevent illness,' failed to differentiate between acute and chronic illness. Had the question been phrased more accurately, such as ‘what beliefs do you have on how to prevent the common cold’ versus ‘what beliefs do you have on how to prevent cancer’ participants may have provided different answers.

All of the participants reported valuing their personal health. One reason that participants viewed health as important was because they felt a link existed between health and social community. Health was seen as essential for the maintenance of relationships, and one participant even went as far to say that “health serves as the foundation for social relationships.” Similarly, another reason that health was seen as important was because as one female participant described, “it is a burden on your family and others when you are sick.” The connection that was stressed between one’s health and one’s relationships with others was consistent with the finding of a study conducted
Traditional Wellness Practices in Contemporary Chinese Society

by Lu (2002). Results from this study found that Chinese participants defined health within the context of being able to fulfill socially desirable roles. Similar to Lu's (2002) study, participants in the current study used social interaction as a foundation when discussing the importance of health.

The final theme that surfaced was the participant's integration of traditional Chinese and western medicine into their healthcare regime. This finding was consistent with previous research which has found that Chinese medicine is practiced concurrently with Western medicine in modern day China; Chinese individuals tend to adapt and willingly accept different forms of healthcare treatments (Mukai, 1990). From the participant responses it appeared that Western medicine was equally or even more frequently used than TCM. Participants felt that Chinese medicine took "too long" in comparison to Western medicine, but participants still stated that they would choose Chinese or Western treatment according to whether they were experiencing an internal disorder or external symptoms. Chinese medicine was also frequently described for being used in cases of health promotion. Leung, Wong, Chan, Choi and Lo (2005) suggested that lifestyle preferences for quick relief as opposed to the total body conditioning that is advocated by traditional Chinese medicine could be one factor responsible for the reduced utilization of traditional medicine.

It is evident that many of the participant's present day health and health related issues are influenced by traditional Chinese values. It was also observed that participants exhibited a wide variety of attitudes and health practices that did not adhere precisely to traditional medical beliefs. Participants tended not trace their beliefs back to traditional Chinese medical theory, but rather focused on their current health beliefs and practices.
None of the participants reported strictly adhering to a traditional belief system of medicine, but rather incorporated traditional beliefs (such as the role of diet) into their everyday lives.

**Future implications**

The current study supports the notion that the Chinese culturally constructed view of health influences the patterns of health-seeking and health maintenance behaviors of Chinese individuals. Although Western biomedicine is used in China today, this study found that it is not the primary method of treatment. Rather, Chinese individuals hold beliefs emphasizing the utilization of health preservation modalities. This attitude appears to stem from traditional wellness beliefs which have been maintained over time. Participants' health practices were embedded into the Chinese cultural framework in which a balanced lifestyle played a major role in the prevention and treatment of disease, while inconsistent routines were believed to contribute to the decline of health. The Chinese focus on health differs from the emphasis that Western biomedicine places on the treatment of disease.

At first glance, the Chinese approach to health with its focus on prevention appears contradictory to the biomedical approach. However, the Chinese individuals within this study found ways to integrate both prevention and treatment into daily life practices. This finding has important implications for future research concerning health in Western culture today. In China, there appears to be a cultural awareness and consensus regarding the roles that both traditional Chinese and Western medicine play within the Chinese system of healthcare. Recognizing the emphasis that TCM places on prevention of illness through daily health practices, it may be beneficial for future research to
investigate more thoroughly the role of prevention in Western healthcare. As Western medicine continues to advance and treatment techniques continue to evolve, future research should examine the notions of illness prevention and health promotion to determine whether these concepts could play a greater role within the Western healthcare system.
References


Table 1

**Participant Demographic Information**

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<th>Participant ID</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Status and demographic information</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>M4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Cashier, age 53</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>University professor, age 28</td>
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Table 2:

*Interview Protocol Questions*

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<th>Question 1</th>
<th>From a personal standpoint, how do you define health?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>How would you define illness?</td>
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<td>Question 3</td>
<td>What causes a person to become ill?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>How important is it to be healthy and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5</td>
<td>What beliefs do you have on how to prevent illness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
<td>Are there certain foods that keep you from getting sick?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7</td>
<td>When you become ill do you take any personal measures before seeking a doctor’s help?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 8</td>
<td>How often do you go to the doctor?</td>
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<td>Question 9</td>
<td>What type of doctor do you see and what does the doctor do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 10</td>
<td>What is the typical Chinese diet and do you follow it in your own life?</td>
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</table>
Appendix A

Transcribed Interviews

Note: Participants are referred to by gender and number. For example, F1 refers to the first female participant. The first seven participants received a different set of questions which were slightly modified following the initial interviews.

1. From a personal standpoint, how would you define health?

F1. Health means happy and I feel very light every morning when I get up. I study and I want to talk with people. I want to do things. I don’t think Chinese people care about the definition of healthy. They only care when the can't get up and do things.

F2. I feel comfortable and I am in good mood.
M1. Health is when I feel full of energy.

M2. Health is not being sick and being able to recover quickly.

M3. NA

F3. Mental world must be calm as well as the physical body.

M4. There is no clear boundary between sickness and health. A man be internally sick but show no symptoms. Without treatment he may be able to recover by himself. On the other extreme is the man who is not sick but always believes that he is and that he needs medicine to recover.

2. How would you define illness?

F1. Sick means I feel heavy. I think I am always very healthy. Sometimes I am in a very bad mood although my body is well. I don’t feel like talking. I don’t like that situation. I don’t think Chinese people care so much about the definitions of being healthy but do care about being sick because they can’t work.

F2. If I have a headache or maybe if I lack sleep or have a stomach ache or I am fragile—this is all “sickness.”

M1. I cannot do basketball or football. I don’t know if my views are the same as other Chinese people because I am only a college student and do not experience the “man pressure” that others do. Pressure makes me feel tired.

M2. If you are not healthy you are sick.
M3. A bad mood or temper can lead to illness. A person’s psychological health can affect their physical health. One is especially weak when in a bad mood. It is a burden on your family and others when you are sick.

F3. Sickness may be when a person cannot move or has had an operation. You are not happy with yourself.

M4. See my previous definition.

3. What causes a person become ill?

F1. NA

F2. Physical sickness occurs when your body is not strong enough to fight an infection. Mental sickness occurs when you worry a lot or are not happy. I worried a lot about getting into a good school and became depressed. Low mental health (low spirit) affects a person’s physical health.

M1. Pressure from society.

M2. I think it depends on the illness. If it is a mental illness you are probably under too much stress. Infections can be spread from person to person.

M3. A bad diet and temperature changes can cause a person to become sick. Also bacteria can make a person sick. Therefore it is important to wash your hands, but I don’t use soap because it is not very convenient.

F3. Both genetics and things that happen after you are born (in the environment); such as unpleasant experiences that cause you to become upset or “unclear” food. I believe that genetics control everything and environment comes second.

M4. Three things- irregular diet, lack of sleep and lack of or too much exercise. People who eat food that tastes good but is not nutritious will become ill. Also, pollution and pesticides in the environment play a role. You must have good habits in order to have good health, and a regular schedule.

4. How important is your health and what do you do to maintain your health?

F1. Being healthy is important to everyone. Keeping a regular diet and enough sleep keep me healthy. For example every day I have my meals at the same time and I eat similar food- seldom eat too much or too little. I like noodles, rice, vegetables which is typical Chinese food. I don’t like food like McDonalds. If you eat that kind of food every day it is terrible for Chinese people.
F2. If you are in good health you can do things well. If you are not healthy then things go wrong. To prevent getting sick I take pills. I don’t often go to the doctor. I will go to the pharmacy and buy my own pills.

M1. Health is number one and most important. I haven’t had any serious health problems so I don’t do much, just a few sports. I think the older men are more conscious about their health so they do more exercise such as taiqi in the mornings. The young men do less because they have less time.

M2. I don’t do much because I haven’t really gone through much illness so far. I seldom exercise, I always smoke, and I eat unhealthy foods. I think this will probably affect me in the long run.

M3. NA

F3. Being healthy is more important than anything in the world. It’s more important than making money. I play table tennis and swim to keep fit. I listen to country music and chat with friends to keep myself happy. When I am happy I am healthy. Green and raw veggies can make you healthy and too much meat can make you fat; also, drinking water in the summer.

M4. Having a healthy body is the most important thing. Spirit is also important.

5. When you become sick, at what point would you see a doctor and what type of doctor?

F1. If the illness is not very serious we won’t go see a doctor. We think we will get better if we rest. I don’t like to see a doctor because in China hospitals are for people with terrible illnesses. I don’t like taking medicine or pills I believe instead that I should sleep. It can solve any problems. Sometimes I have very painful stomachs and I cannot walk. I know I should see a doctor but I will only go if it is very serious. I would see a Western Doctor. The traditional Chinese can solve problems that the Western way cannot cure but it is too slow. For example when I was very nervous about my college entrance exams and I couldn’t sleep I saw a traditional doctor.

F2. I would go see a Western doctor when I was very sick.

M1. If I am sick I will always go to the doctor. I might see a traditional Chinese doctor. Chinese doctors can perform guasha (raking), bagua (cups), or zhenju (acupuncture). There is also traditional Chinese medicine but it is complicated to mix herbs together. The medical system is China is not as developed, but the school will pay for me to see a doctor. Sometimes people from the rural areas are sick but cannot afford to see a doctor. I have some relatives in the country and when they get sick they refuse to go to the doctor because they think it is a burden on their family. Western medicine is more convenient and has quicker results that Chinese medicine.
M2. I would wait a few days if I had the flu or a cold and I would rest. I may see a Western doctor because it is faster than Chinese medicine.

M3. When the sickness gets out of hand I would go and see a doctor, most likely the school doctor. Some people don’t go to the doctor because they don’t feel bad so they don’t know they are ill.

F3. I may wait to see an either a Chinese or Western doctor if my sickness is not serious.

M4. If disease is serious I see a Western doctor. Chinese medicine takes too long. Western medicine is extracted from chemicals and causes extra reactions. It destroys the body, the stomach, and the heart. Chinese medicine comes from plants and animals and it is less harmful. Massage and acupuncture have a good effect on a person’s health. They increase circulation in the body, as well as self slapping massage.

6. Do you believe that diet is an important part of health?

F1. I think Chinese food is very healthy because we rice and noodles which contain the necessary vitamin and protein and other nutritious elements. Chinese people like to fry meat and vegetables together which creates a balance. Chinese people care more about the taste and color than nutrition. Food preparation is important.

F2. NA

M1. NA

M2. I know it is important but I do not follow a particular diet.

M3. Only when I get sick do I pay attention to diet. I would not think about it first.

F3. Low calorie food can make you healthy.

M4. Diet is important as well as getting enough sleep and exercise.

7. Can something that you eat keep you healthy or prevent you from becoming ill?

F1. Tofu and fish make you healthy. I think pigs always eat what we throw away so they are not healthy for us to eat. Fish live in river so they are healthy for us.

F2. I think food can be helpful. In the summer you should avoid certain meat and eat only certain types of food. For instance I will only eat meat once every two days.

M1. I like to eat meat or beef and I make myself eat vegetables because they are healthy. Fresh fruit and vegetables can prevent you from catching a cold and they are good for your health.
M2. NA

M3. NA

F3. Prior to seeing a doctor I would have guasha, massage and try a special diet. For instances if I have rash I must avoid seafood. Cucumber prevents you have getting a cough.

M4. Chinese people use food to cure disease. Taking vitamins, eating ginger, and boiling leeks in water can cure a cold. Also, acupuncture and massage have good effect on health.

8. What does the typical Chinese diet look like and do you choose follow this diet?

F1. I eat noodles every day. Every morning I eat the same thing every day. For breakfast I eat one egg and drink a glass of milk.

F2. Flour products such as what is in Chinese bread.

M1. NA

M2. Typical food is rice and a lot of the foods are cooked and are not eaten raw.

M3. There is a lot of rice, oil, and fat. This is contradictory because it is not healthy. However, Chinese people for thousands of years have eaten this way.

F3. I eat porridge for breakfast because it is liquid and we need soft and liquid food in the morning. You have had a full rest from the night so you don’t need much food (just a small amount) for morning. Breakfast is not as important as lunch or dinner. Most people don’t eat breakfast to save time. Rice and steam buns are part of the Chinese diet because they taste good and it is tradition. Dessert is uncommon. The youth eat more snacks (smaller portions) than the elderly because it is fashionable and too lose weight.

M4. NA

1. From a personal standpoint, how do you define health?

M5. This definition includes both mental and physical wellbeing and calmness.

F4. A person who has full spirit and full energy. It includes both physical and psychological health.

F5. There is both physical and mental health. If either one of them is lost you are not healthy. Mental health is more important than physical health.
M6. Health involves both the body and mental health. This describes a person who is energetic and without sickness. They are happy and optimistic.

F6. Health is both internal and external. A person is who is healthy has a happy life and is optimistic. Internally, there is no illness and they don’t need to go to the hospital.

F7. Never getting sick. This includes both physical and mental health.

F8. Health is being physically comfortable. Psychological health occurs when a person’s dreams are fulfilled and they are willing and energetic in their work.

F9. Every part of your body is well. You have a good appetite and you can do work. You can deal with the pressure from work or from school.

F10. There is both physical and mental health. Physically you feel good and mentally you are happy and not depressed.

F11. Physical and mental play a role in health. Physical is feeling well and mental is being happy and not having worries.

F12. A person is physically normal and does not have any special illness.

F13. Being healthy means feeling good, keeping fit, and seldom visiting the hospital.

M7. It includes both mental and physical health. Not feeling bad. Mentally not feeling pressured and physically feeling joyful.

F14. Being healthy is having good energy and also having a good physical appearance.

F15. No disease, feeling happy, and being full of energy all define good health.

M8. There is psychological and physical illness. Psychological illness is being narrow-minded or envying others. Physical illness is easily becoming ill. For example catching a cold or having a cough.

F16. Being in a happy mood, and having no sickness.

2. How would you define illness?

M5. The opposite of being healthy and not being in balance is unhealthy.

F4. Low spirit or being in pain also sadness.

F5. Illness is extreme painfulness and not being able to do what you want.
M6. Illness is when you get a disease but also when you are not in a good mood. I think when you are upset your body might also have some kind of dysfunction.

F6. Either their interior or exterior is ill. If they are internally ill they may have performed wrong deeds and suffer from within. Sometimes there are no symptoms.

F7. This means I can’t do whatever I want. I can’t work, I am weak, and I have to stay in the hospital.

F8. I don’t have a lot of physical illness because I think that I have a healthy body. Sometimes when I become frustrated and lose my hopes because my dreams seem so far away I feel uncomfortable. I more often experience psychological than physical sickness.

F9. There are 2 kinds of diseases; physical and psychological. Physical illness is when part of your body cannot work well. Psychological illness is when you worry too much about things that you shouldn’t normally worry about. For instance, Chinese students in high school have a lot of pressure from parents, teachers, and themselves. Some students can’t take that pressure so they commit suicide.

F10. Physical illness is when you don’t feel good. There is something wrong with your body and you must see the doctor. Mental illness is when you feel unhappy or depressed. Something is wrong with your mind.

F11. Physically a person can feel unwell. They may suffer from heart disease of other serious illnesses. On the other hand, sometimes a person may feel depressed.

F12. Illness is when you feel part of your body can’t do things normally. It is different from normal functioning. You suffer pain and you don’t feel well.

F13. Illness does not necessarily mean visiting the hospital. Sometimes a person who is ill may feel depressed. There is both mental and physical illness.

M7. Physical illness is having aches, problems, and illnesses that make you feel uneasy.

F14. Illness is having various problems that change with age. In my age group (age 49), there are problems with high blood pressure, heart problems, cancer, and other problems with the blood and the brain.

F15. I look healthy but I actually have a lot of problems. I have a lot of head, heart, and knee aches and complications. This is due to the intense labor and stress that I had as a child.

M8. There are two sides- both physical and mental health. Health is not having any disease. A person who is relaxed and not under pressure is healthy.
F16. Having diseases such as a high fever or a cold. Serious diseases may be caused by genetics or the environment.

3. What causes a person to become ill?

M5. Not having a balance.

F4. A person’s DNA and unhealthy lifestyle.

F5. NA

M6. NA

F6. NA

F7. NA

F8. NA

F9. Something a person eats or drinks or pressure from work (diet and stress).

F10. Dirty food, accidents, a big failure that depresses you can all make you either mentally or physically sick.

F11. The environment such as heat and pollution can make a person sick. Also a person’s mood can affect their health. If they can’t express themselves they may feel depressed.

F12. Eating a poisonous food or over exerting yourself with stress.

F13. An unwholesome lifestyle. Eating a big dinner one day and eating no dinner the next for example. Chinese people often hang on and don’t visit the doctor when they are ill.

M7. Having a bad diet or unhealthy lifestyle, as well as smoking and drinking can cause illness. Diseases are spread through bacteria from person to person. Cancer can be caused by an unbalanced lifestyle, too much pressure, pollution from the environment, or an individual’s genes.

F14. Having an unhealthy diet, not enough exercise, and getting angry can cause illnesses like cancer.

F15. For me personally, I had too much manual labor to do as a child. I was constantly being over loaded because there was a lot of poverty and part of survival was to work harder.

M8. Lack of exercise. Proper living habits are necessary, and it is important to pay attention to your diet. You shouldn’t be lazy and you must use your brain often. In order
to prevent such things are cancer, heart disease, or more serious illnesses you must have a high spirit and lots of energy.

F16. Illness can be caused by irregular habits or a bad diet. Also a poor immune system and lack of exercise can contribute.

4. How important is it for a person to be healthy and why?

M5. Health, especially mental health, is very important. If a person is not healthy they can’t be successful in life. Health is more important than wealth.

F4. Health is necessary because it is the basis of all kinds of social activities. You need health to survive.

F5. As long as you own health you own the world. Chinese have a saying that health equals wealth. Actually health is more important than money. If you are healthy, than you can work, make money, and seek entertainment.

M6. You can do things much better and more efficiently. For example right now we are all studying in the university and if we get sick we have to take time to rest and I think this time is wasted.

F6. A person can save a lot of money by staying healthy. If you don’t feel well, you have no energy, and you can’t work and you feel miserable. If you are healthy you can make others around you feel good. Otherwise they fuss over you when you are sick.

F7. I want to enjoy my life. If I am not healthy I can’t do this. I want to have a happy family life and career.

F8. I would like to live for a long time. Healthy people can fulfill a lot of things. Having both a healthy body and mind are needed to support people.

F9. If you want to live you have to be healthy. Health is a necessity. If you want to achieve something you need to be physically healthy. Country people need to be healthy in order to be strong.

F10. NA

F11. Exercise as well as forming good habits such as eating three meals a day. Going to sleep early and getting up early. I don’t follow these beliefs because I am too busy.

F12. Health is a basic need. If you are unhealthy you can’t do the things you want to do. You can’t go out and you cannot communicate. Instead you must stay in your room.

F13. Health is number one. Other things such as fame or power are zero. They are meaningless without health.
M7. You have to survive. For live a better life you need to enjoy yourself. Health is the most important aspect of a person’s life.

F14. A person must be healthy to have a good job and to be able to work. It is also less of a burden to society and ones family if they are in good health.

F15. Health is most important. Not having health is equivalent to not having life. Money and status do not exist without health.

M8. NA

F16. NA

5. What beliefs do you have on how to prevent illness?

6. Are there certain foods that keep you from getting sick?

M5. Kindness is a cultural value. All traditional Chinese masters emphasize kindness. This affects a person’s mood (their happiness). I perform Chinese meditation and follow traditional roles of the Chinese health system. For example, according to traditional rules, a person should change their life style depending on the seasons. Humans should change their food, drinks, clothes, and colors of clothing to be consistent with nature and the universe. A lot of people don’t know this anymore and don’t follow this way of life. Real Chinese medicine doctors can predict the future. Chinese culture is based on “I Qing” and “The Yellow Emperor,” books written over 4,000 years ago. This has influenced everything from Chinese gardens and architecture and the people’s way of life (behaviors, eating patterns, mental state, etc). In the summer one should eat bitter food to defeat the fire within the body because summer is so hot (four elements- water, wind, earth, and fire). Spicy or warm food is needed in the winter. Sour tastes in the fall are necessary. Herbal medicine has herbal characteristics which give the body internal power. Plants have medical ingredients to cure many illnesses and are effective for treating cancer. Chinese massage can cure headaches by transferring energy to the part of the body in need. Chinese medicine should be combined with Western medicine.

F4. A person must have a regular lifestyle. They must exercise and having a good job can prevent illness. If you don’t have a job you become idle and your life is meaningless. Food can cure disease better than medicine. Medicine can be both good and bad. If you feel worried or depressed you should eat more cucumber and bitter melon.

F5. A person should eat nutritiously and they should not eat too much or too little. They should also get enough sleep. Food can prevent you from getting sick. Seeds of the lotus flower can help you with anxiety. Mushrooms, grain and fiber can get rid of toxins in your gut. Boiling roses can drinking them in hot water can prevent both anxiety and depression as well as having cosmetic elements (purifies the skin). Radish can stop gas and bloating. Vegetables such as zucchini are good for your health and can make you urinate.
Traditional Wellness Practices in Contemporary Chinese Society

M6. I usually go to the gym and I weight lift. I think body building makes you stronger. I like to keep a balanced diet. I seldom eat fat or sweet things. I usually eat beef. High fiber and low fat things are good for my health. I also take vitamins every day and a lot of fruit. Every day I eat an apple or watermelon which I think can prevent me from getting sick.

F6. Soymilk and tofu prevent cancer. A person should also drink more water. A certain amount of water each day is good. Also putting honey in the water is good for you. You should shun away from oil and eat more vegetables and green food. Variety is good. You should also be careful and limit your red meat intake. You should get enough sleep or else you feel exhausted. Communicating with others can release stress. Diet is very important. We have Chinese herbs and medicine and traditional Chinese doctors who all take different approaches by working with the inner body. Chinese doctor use certain food and drink depending on the season. For example in spring, we don’t serve kidney. Also Western medicine may cause unwanted side effects.

F7. Having a balanced diet is important; having meals on time every day. Having a balanced diet of vegetables and protein, as well as taking vitamins is important. Food is very important and one should not eat too much fat. Also, a person should exercise often. Sometimes I am lazy and I don’t exercise every day, even though in the bottom of my heart I know it is very important. Vegetables and fruit are most important; I don’t need to eat meat and fish every day.

F8. ‘In order to be healthy you must do what you don’t do, eat what you don’t eat and drink what you don’t drink’ - a quote from Hemmingway. I think doing things I like and not pushing myself (stopping studying when I am tired) prevents me from getting sick. A person should not eat until they are full. They should always eat until they are 70-80% full. I don’t follow these things, but I do know them. Also, I don’t smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol or eat too much fried food. Chinese red sugar prevents illness, especially menstrual cramps. Also a girl should not eat cold food when she is having her period and she should not go swimming. If a person comes down with a cold they should boil water and ginger together and drink it. If a person has a headache they should sleep. I never take medication. There is a saying that medication is a kind of poison. Some people take Chinese herbs to keep healthy but I don’t think this is a good idea because they are foreign to the human body. Sleep is the best thing.

F9. Have a good diet, don’t smoke, don’t drink alcohol, and exercise. I follow these beliefs. A good diet is eating fruit and vegetables and not eating too much fat. Apples can prevent a person from getting sick. My parents may have superstitious Chinese beliefs but I don’t have or remember any.

F10. Exercise and surrounding yourself with good friends to keep you happy. Keeping way from foods that can make you ill or that you are allergic to.

F11. Diet is important. If a person is fat, though, a diet can be hurtful. They should eat three meals a day on time. They need good nutrition from vegetables and meat.
F12. You need a regular schedule. Every morning going running and eating a regular diet. But I am too busy with classes. If you have bad skin or catch a cold my mom told me you must either drink or put on your skin a kind of poison mixed with water.

F13. A healthy lifestyle is very important and so is getting enough exercise. A diet rich in protein and low in fat is necessary. Also, eating a lot of fruit and vegetables is good. There are specific kinds of foods that can prevent certain diseases. For example any kind of animal liver and mushrooms. I learned this information in my PE class in college. This is healthy for you but it is not a way to lose weight.

M7. In order to prevent disease a person must have proper habits including a healthy diet, not smoking, drinking, or doing drugs. Pollution is becoming a more serious problem that can cause disease. People need to work together with doctors to prevent illness. Also, exercising more is important. Having a balanced diet is essential. The Chinese diet differs from the US because Americans love meat. We have different bodies. In China, it is easier for us to digest vegetable, such as corn, than it is for us to digest meat. Diet is also influenced by the state or class of people. The rich eat more meat. The lower people eat to survive. There are fifty-six ethnic groups in China and different people have different physiques. The British believe that one apple a day can prevent getting sick. I don't believe this. Tofu can prevent sickness. Cucumber can prevent high blood pressure. Tomatoes contain vitamin C and E. Instead of taking vitamins, people should eat more vegetables with dark colors; for example dark green and red vegetables. Too much meat is not good. Sometimes food is infected from pesticides or pollution in the environment. A person should eat the right amount of food.

F14. Superstitious people may go to the temple to pray but I go to the doctor instead. Feeling happy and getting enough exercise are important. “Green food,” like vegetables and vegetarian food (not eating meat, only occasionally eating meat, or replacing meat with seafood) are essential for keeping healthy. The food should be pesticide free and most of the food in China is organic.

F15. Exercise, being happy, and having a healthy diet. A healthy diet consists of eating a light dinner as well as eating less meat or not eating meat. We eat soy products which contain the same nutrients as meat. Seafood or vegetables dried in the sun are very good for health. They can prevent illness. Boiled food is not as healthy because when food is boiled a kind of substance in the food that causes cancer comes out. Fried food is also not healthy.

M8. I never have had any serious illnesses. I never take vitamins. I have a very healthy diet and also a very happy mood. I also exercise often (taiqi). This is why I don't get sick.

F16. Chinese people don't drink milk because in the past there was a milk shortage. Now more people think milk plays a bigger role in health. People need calcium. Many people stop eating fried foods because they want to have a better diet. It is important to pay attention to both your diet and the amount you exercise. Fried foods can cause certain
diseases. Mushrooms can prevent cancer. They also reduce the thickness of the blood. Eating lots of fruits and vegetables and less meat is also good for health. More exercise can cause a person to be in a happier mood.

7. When you become ill do you take any personal measures before seeking a doctor’s help?
8. How often do you go to the doctor?
9. What type of doctor do you see and what does the doctor do?

M5. Depending on the illness I may see a doctor. I practice Chinese meditation so I am rarely ill. Body is like a life temple, you need your heart to be peaceful and your mind to be clear.

F4. Before going to the doctor I may do massage, guasha, and bagua. As long as I can overcome an illness on my own I will not see a doctor. I can cure myself if a disease comes infrequently.

F5. I will stop working and take hot shower and do some head massaging and guasha. If I have a high fever I use two fingers and pull the skin. Also for a fever I will do a foot massage. She goes to the doctor once every three months because of her diabetes. To control her diabetes she monitors her sugar intake and takes long walks at night. She does not think her illness is serious. Serious patients would need shots. I see both Western and Chinese doctors and I would see a Western doctor only if I was very sick. I would see a Chinese doctor if I want to make myself more healthy.

M6. If I have a sore throat I will take more vitamin C, drink more water, and rest more. I usually go a Western doctor once a year. It depends on the illness. For example I would see a Chinese doctor if I had a stomachache. Western doctors can give you Chinese medicine as well.

F6. If the illness is serious or something that will affect me for the rest of my life I will see a Western doctor. If it is not serious- a sore throat, flu, or headache I will not see the doctor. I seldom go to the doctor because I don’t run into health problems. Also I can ask my older brother for help because he is a doctor.

F7. At home I keep medicines. I don’t go to the doctor if I can help it. In my family we don’t get sick very often. Chinese traditional medicine as well as taking aspirin is effective. It is also very expensive to go to the doctor. And we don’t think illness is so serious. Approximately 80% of Chinese don’t ever go to the doctor until it is too late. This is what happened to my grandmother who died of cancer. They don’t go to have physical exams and they are not health conscious. It is common for them to still drink and smoke. I go to the doctor once a year for a physical.

F8. I am rarely sick. Maybe the last time I saw a doctor was in high school… I can’t remember. During my time at the university I have only got sick maybe 2-3 times and it
is always only a small cold. I see a Western doctor. There is not a clear distinction between a western and Chinese doctor.

F9. Before seeing a doctor I would drink more water and ask my mom for help. I might take Chinese medicine and rest more. I must get a physical exam for school once a year. Otherwise if I am not sick I don’t go to see the doctor. I am only sick 2-3 times a year with minor colds, so I don’t go see a doctor for this. If I do go, it is a western doctor because it is faster than a Chinese doctor. A Chinese doctor would take your pulse whereas a western doctor uses equipment and can prescribe both Chinese and western medicine. Chinese doctors also wrap up herbs in paper and you must take them home and boil them in water and drink them.

F10. I catch a cold sometimes because I maybe let the fan blow on me during the night. Every fall and spring I have cold-like symptoms. I take Chinese medicine although it may contain some Western elements. I seldom see a doctor. I will only see a doctor if I am unfamiliar with a disease. I would then see either a Western or a Chinese doctor.

F11. I will take Western medicine sometimes. I try to ignore the illness with the belief that I will recover on my own. I go to the doctor about twice a year. I will go if I get a cut or if something really hurts or if I am very uncomfortable. Then I will see a Chinese doctor.

F12. I will rest or sleep. I only sometimes see a doctor because I am very healthy. Once a year maybe I go to either a Chinese or a Western doctor.

F13. I think that if you don’t feel well you should go to see the doctor. I do take pills or antibiotics sometimes that are prescribed or over the counter. I don’t use herbs or traditional medicine very often. Twice a year I go to the doctor if I have a cold usually. But the doctors are usually busy with patients and don’t have much time.

M7. I sometimes take medicine. I will see either a Chinese doctor or Western doctor (or take Chinese or Western medicine) depending on my illness. If it is a problem with my heart I would see a Chinese doctor. If it is an infection I would take antibiotics (Western way). I am very healthy so I see a doctor only once every two years. I mostly see a Western doctor. I sometimes see a Chinese doctor because they specialize in internal diseases and some Western doctors can’t solve such problems; for example, digestive problems. Chinese medicine uses guasha which releases the fire and the toxins from the body. Western doctors are able to conduct physical exams, take x-rays, or take blood tests.

F14. I won’t go to see a doctor if I can solve the problem by myself. The type of doctor I see (Western or Chinese) would depend on the disease that I have. However, I do not have any diseases or illness so I never go to the doctor. If I did, I would see a Western doctor.

F15. I see a Western doctor about once a year for a physical exam. In my daily life, for minor problems, I see a Chinese doctor. For example, for stomach, leg or waste aches I
go to see a Chinese doctor who gives me herbs and massage. I am given medicine that I can put directly on the spot of the pain. It is not taken orally.

M8. I would see a Western doctor if I was ill but in recent years I never or very seldom see a doctor. When I had a skin disease I went to see a Chinese doctor. But because I am never sick there is no reason for me to see a doctor. If I get a cold or the flu I will take medicine that I have at home.

F16. I am seldom ill because I am always very happy. I think psychological health is very important. I would see a Western doctor if I got sick because it is much faster. In order to keep healthy I adjust my body to the environment and the different seasons and I will see a Chinese doctor. If I get sick I will take medicine and recover on my own at home. Once I have recovered I will still continue taking Chinese medicine.

10. What is the typical Chinese diet and do you follow it in your own life?

M5. In Chinese cuisine there are many different flavors, tastes, and colors. Many drink hard liquor and they add medicine into it. It is called “medicinal hard liquor.” It is okay for people to drink it in the winter but not in the summer because you don’t want to raise your blood pressure.

F4. The Chinese diet is following the Western diet more and more. This means there is an increase in calories and sugar. This is not healthy.

F5. There needs to be a way to integrate the Western and Chinese ways of eating. Western food has a lot of calories and sugar. Chinese eat less meat and the food is more pure, but not as pure as before. More youth want to eat meat because they think it tastes good but it also has a lot of fat.

M6. I like to eat a lot of fish and seafood, and also meat (but not pork). I like to eat all kinds of vegetables, especially ones high in fiber. Not everyone eats this way.

F6. Noodles and food made from flour, like dumplings are part of the Chinese diet. Rice, soymilk and tofu generate materials within the body that prevent cancer and prevent a person from having high blood pressure. Lots of Chinese people know that these products are good for their health.

F7. I seldom have milk. I care a lot about vegetables and fruit. In the Chinese diet there is a lot of protein: pork, mutton, beef and chicken. People from Beijing prefer a lot of meat and they are not happy without it. People shouldn’t eat so much meat because it is unhealthy.

F8. There is less fried food in the Chinese diet than compared with the American diet. There is a lot of fruit and vegetables, especially leaves. Chinese diet is healthy and I try to follow it. I also like Western food such as ice cream, chocolate and sweet things.
F9. We don’t eat as many hamburgers, like Americans. We have rice and we cook our dishes together. Vegetables and meat are healthier than hamburgers. We eat mainly eggs, vegetables, fish and tofu.

F10. Chinese people eat rice. The dishes contain fewer calories than cheese, hamburgers, or coke, which is American food. We drink hot water here, especially hot tea. It is our custom. The Chinese think that if you drink cold water it will make you sick. Also we are told cheese is made from bad milk. Chinese food is said to be the healthiest food in the world. People are slimmer here. I think this is partly because of your genes but also partly because diet. Our genes have continued to change over thousands of years but our diet has remained mostly the same.

F11. We don’t drink milk. Soymilk is much healthier. There is scientific evidence for this on the internet. We don’t eat too much fat and we avoid hamburgers and coke. We don’t like this type of food. We eat vegetables.

F12. I like to eat rice, vegetables, and meat like pork or beef. Sometimes I drink coke and other drinks from the western world. The Chinese diet is healthier than the Western people’s diet. American food has things like hamburgers and fast food (like Mc Donald) which has much more calories. Chinese food in comparison has fewer calories.

F13. Traditionally, Chinese people eat many vegetables because they are cheap. Now days, people eat more meat. We drink nothing when we eat, only soup, because this is tradition. Not coke or tea. We don’t have dessert with our meals because the meals are kept simple. We have three dishes usually- two vegetable dishes and one meat dish or seafood dish. We may have fruit at least one hour after the meal but we must wait because otherwise the fruit ferments in our stomach and this is not good for our health. This is what we believe. Chinese government officials have a good medical care but it is very expensive for everyone else. Most people cannot afford to buy health insurance. And even so, it is sometimes difficult to get the money from the insurance companies when it is needed. My father’s brother is a farmer and he has cancer. He does not take his illness seriously. Most farmers earn 300 yuan a month. It can cost 100-300 yuan to go to see a doctor. My uncle is supported by my mother and father. He has had chemotherapy but it is very expensive. He also does qigong to help him with his illness. Farmers occupy 70% of the population but they are not protected, and the hospital equipment is out of date in the rural areas.

M7. Tofu can prevent illness. Cucumber can prevent high blood pressure. Tomato contains vitamin C and E.

F14. Chinese people eat a lot of dumplings and rice noodles. We also eat lots of vegetables such as corn, carrot, mushrooms, tomatoes, onions, etc. The Chinese diet is healthy. We eat a lot of beans and soy products. Western food is referred to as the “unhealthy food” by the Chinese because it is mainly hamburgers and fast food.
F15. Not all Chinese food is good; for example cold rice noodles and some fried foods. The rice noodles are not made by authorized companies. Also, food sold on the side of the road may not be good because of the pollution and/or bacteria it is exposed to. At home we eat noodles for breakfast. For lunch we eat mantou (bread) and lunch is the most important meal of the day, so it should also be the biggest. For dinner, we eat vegetables and porridge or soup because they are the easiest to digest at night.

M8. Chinese people eat meat and vegetables as well as corn and wheat products. We eat more vegetables and only a little meat. I follow this traditional Chinese diet. I don't pay too much attention to what I eat. But I change my diet according to the seasons. Carrots can give you indigestion and gas.

F16. Once a week we will eat meat. The Chinese diet is healthy. I don't really avoid any certain type of food but I rarely eat dessert. This is how we are accustomed to eating.