

## EDITORIAL

### Reflections on 2019 Conference and announcing a special issue

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We write this as the 2019 conference comes to an end (1). This year the conference theme was 'Cross-cultural perspectives on ethics, healthy ageing and care'. We had participants from 18 countries and much interesting discussion on topics such as moral courage, technology in care, codes and regulation, conscientious objection and ethical competence. We also had the annual meeting of the journal's *Editorial Board* and discussed our progress, current challenges and a future special issue.

Professor Jing-Bao Nie (2) was the first keynote speaker, joining the conference by Zoom from New Zealand. He approached the overall conference theme through the lens of Confucian philosophy. The idea of a 'moral pilgrimage' and the distinctive Eastern value of 'filial piety' were central his discussion of family and state responsibilities to respect for elders and the fulfilment of care needs.

A recent initiative to enforce filial piety in Shanghai involved extended provisions of a 2013 law which enabled elderly parents to sue their children if they were neglectful. The extension means that the Shanghai authorities can now downgrade the credit score of offenders (3).

As Professor Nie explained, 'filial piety' is underpinned by Confucian ethics and challenged by societal and economic changes. His explanation of demographic changes, the impact of the one child policy, migration to cities and high suicide rates of elders in rural China make for a bleak elder care landscape. More general challenges of elder care are not unique to China.

It has been pointed out that 'it took hundreds of thousands of years for the world population to grow to one billion' and in just two centuries it had grown sevenfold now exceeding over 7 billion people (4United Nations Population Fund 2016). Over 10 years ago, Wray (5) described the situation starkly:

The data are in: we are aging. Individually and collectively; nationally and globally. If you think this is a problem, consider the alternative.

Conference plenary panellists and presenters explored critical questions such as: 'Is it always ethical to prolong life?' (Ebin Arries, Catherine Johnson, Sarah Wolfensohn and Christopher Herbert); 'What does good cross-cultural care look like?' (Settimio Monteverde, Simon Pedsizi and Chandra McGowan); 'How are ethical challenges of intimacy to be negotiated in elder care settings?' (Chris Gastmans); And 'How should

we think about individualised care?’ (Riitta Suhonen) provided much scope for discussion and food for reflection over the two days.

The conference discussions contribute to our reflections as part of a research networking project on the theme of: ‘Roles, responsibilities and the future care of older adults.’ Four case studies were developed (two in China and two in the England) and international experts were invited to contribute commentaries in response to these. Experts from 11 countries came together to discuss the case focusing on philosophy, policy and practice. Part of the international meeting involved working with a London-based theatre group who enacted stories relating to elders and social isolation (3).

The research meeting confirmed, as did our conference, that there is much to do to meaningfully address the challenges that lie ahead. A challenge, addressed at our conference, and also during an Editorial Board discussion relates to: ‘What counts as ethical competence in relation to care-giving?’ and ‘how might this relate to ethics education?’ This will be a topic of a future Editorial.

For now, we should take heart from the fact that so many expert care practitioners, educators and researchers from across countries and different cultures are committed to coming together to address current challenges relating to elder care. This signals our best hope in finding sustainable solutions.

### **A new call for papers**

To further advance scholarship and to stimulate new thinking in this area, we invite submissions for a future issue of this journal on ‘ethics and care for older adults’. We hope that such submissions might explore the following topics, amongst others:

- Given the predominance of attention that has been devoted to identifying and clarifying ethical principles in health care, what principles ought to be refined or newly developed to shape good care for older adults who are receiving a variety of different health and social care supports within and beyond institutional care settings?
- How should the roles and ethical responsibilities of the different actors involved in the care of older adults be understood, and do such responsibilities differ depending on whether the caregiver is unpaid and acting outside of a professional capacity?
- What role should new technologies (including robotics, assistive living devices, and smart homes) play in supporting good care for older adults? Is a technology-driven approach to caregiving feasible and/or ethically defensible?
- How should culturally-specific moral accounts that affirm family caregiving duties (such as the concept of ‘filial piety’ within Confucian philosophy or the idea of ‘reciprocity’ articulated in Europe and North America) be drawn upon to shape future care policy and practice in different national and international settings?

- Is there a role for legal and regulatory approaches to endorse and govern interpersonal caregiving ethical obligations in order to formally address the growing and under-resourced care needs of ageing populations? What are the practical implications of such approaches?
- What distinctive ethical issues arise in everyday caregiving for older adults, as people age and transition between different settings and services in light of their changing needs?

We hope you will share ethical insights drawn from a variety of cultural contexts that enable the sharing of ideas and novel approaches to the philosophy and ethics of ageing, policy and practice. We look forward to your submissions.

## REFERENCES

1. Conference – add link
2. Professor Nie – add link
3. Brant R. (2016) Enforcing family care by law in Shanghai *BBC News* (see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-36394941> )
4. United Nations Population Fund (2016) *State of World Population 2016* (see <http://www.unfpa.org/> )
5. Wray L.G. (2006) *Global Demographic Trends and Provisioning for the Future* The Levy Economics Institute (See [http://www.levyinstitute.org/pubs/CP/Conf\\_April28\\_papers/Randy-Wray-paper.pdf](http://www.levyinstitute.org/pubs/CP/Conf_April28_papers/Randy-Wray-paper.pdf) )