

Globethics Repository

The logo for Globethics, featuring the word "Globethics" in white, sans-serif font centered within a solid blue rectangular background.

The moral foundation and good practice of long-term care

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see <https://www.globethics.net>. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see <https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy>.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Wong, Honchung
Publisher	Eubios ethics institute
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-07-11 22:46:33
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/176637

The Moral Foundation and Good Practice of Long-term Care: A Confucian Perspective

Honchung Wong,

Ph.D. student, Graduate Institute of Philosophy, National Central University, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Email: honcwong@cc.ncu.edu.tw

Global aging creates what may be the greatest public health problem of the twenty-first century. By 2040, there will be more people in the United States over age eighty than there are preschoolers. By 2050, half of continental Europe will be forty-nine or older, and well before that, by 2030, one of every two adults in development countries will have reached retirement age. While the proportion of the elderly in developed countries is due to double over the next fifty years, it is due to triple in East Asia. By 2050, there will be 332 million Chinese sixty-five years of age or over, equivalent to the world's elderly population in 1990. The 2 billion people over age sixty who will live in our aging world by 2050 will mostly be living in developing countries. The rapid growth of the world's elderly population increases the burdens for the management of chronic disease and long-term care, which presents an urgent challenge around the world.

How to tackle these serious problems from Confucian perspective? In Confucianism, the sense of compassion cannot bear to see the sufferings of others is equal to the virtue of *ren* (beneficence), which is the highest among all virtues and is the foundation of all other virtues, and filial piety is a starting point of practicing *ren*, since this sense of compassion manifests most directly through our attitudes towards our parents. Moreover, we have a duty to love and take care of the rest of our family members, and Confucian thinks that love and care of this kind is irreplaceable. It seems to think that the burdens of long-term care for the aged people should be shouldered on their families. However, Confucian also thinks that a good ruler or government should provide public support to families in its society if it is needed. Rather than letting families to face the caring load for their vulnerable members by themselves, a Confucian thinks that a government has a responsibility to maintain the normal functioning of families in its society in health care, a fortiori, in long-term care. One of the objectives to this ideal long-term care model is on the one hand to maintain elderly people their normal familial lives if it is possible, and on the other hand to alleviate the burden to their families. Hence, for example, public funded in-home supportive service or day-care will be preferable to institutional care far away from home for this objective.

In this paper, I first articulate the moral foundation of long-term care from a Confucian perspective. Secondly, I critically examine various

approaches to tackle with long-term care problems, such as Martha C. Nussbaum's capability approach, Norman Daniels' prudential lifespan account and Eva Feder Kittay's feminist approach. Finally, I define good practice of long-term care from Confucian perspective.