

Publication

Remote Technologies and Filial Obligations at a Distance: New Opportunities and Ethical Challenges

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The coupled growth of population aging and international migration warrants attention on the methods and solutions available to adult children living overseas to provide distance caregiving for their aging parents. Despite living apart from their parents, the transnational informal care literature has indicated that first-generation immigrants remain committed to carry out their filial caregiving obligations in extensive and creative ways. With functions to remotely access health information enabled by emergency, wearable, motion, and video sensors, remote monitoring technologies (RMTs) may thus also allow these international migrants to be alerted in sudden changes and remain informed of their parent's state of health. As technological solutions for caregiving, RMTs could allow independent living for older persons while any unusual deviations from normal health patterns are detected and appropriately supported. With a vignette of a distance care arrangement, we engage with concepts such as filial piety, in-absentia caregiving distress, and the social exchange theory, as well as the upholding of shifting cultural ideals to illustrate the complex dynamic of the satisfaction and quality of the informal caregiving relationship. This paper extends the traditional ethical issues in technology-aided caregiving, such as autonomy, privacy, and justice, to be considered within the context of distance care. We also posit newer ethical considerations such as consent in power imbalances, harm to caregivers, and stigma. These known and new ethical issues aim to encourage further ethically conscious design and use of RMTs to support distance care for older persons.

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