Filial Piety and elder Abuse within the Chinese Community: a clinician’s perspective

Panel discussion: Massey University Workshop
26 October 2012

Dr Sai Wong
Sue Wong
Patrick Au (patau@xtra.co.nz)
Statistics of physical assaults: elder abuse (aged 65 or older) in Auckland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Rate per 100,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Asians</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European/Other peoples</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: NDSA, 2012)
Statistics: Hong Kong

- Between Jan to Sept 2011
  - Total reported cases- 273
  - Types of abuse
    - Physical: 204
    - Psychological: 16
    - Neglect: 2
    - Financial: 32
    - Abandonment: 2
    - Sexual: 1
    - Others: 1
    - Multiple methods of abuse: 11

Male/ Female: 156/117
Relationship with abusers:
- Partner: 186
- Son: 24
- Daughters: 4
- Daughter-in-laws: 7
- Son-in-laws: 3
- Other relatives: 3
- Grandchildren: 2
This presentation

• Is not….
  – about providing a workshop on Filial Piety

• Is about ….
  – Sharing of experience and suggesting a few hypotheses on elder abuse within the Chinese community
  – From the clinician’s perspective
Filial:
- Formal relating to the relationship of a son or daughter to their parents
- Filial duty

Piety:
- A behaviour that shows respect for the religion

For the Chinese, FP is more than the literal meaning
Chinese Beliefs regarding children and parents relationship-
the traditional concept of filial piety 孝道

• A virtue respect for one’s parents and ancestors.
• A prescription of obedience and indebtedness to parents.
  – Confucius once said: "In serving his parents, a filial son reveres
    them in daily life; he makes them happy while he nourishes
    them; he takes anxious care of them in sickness; he shows great
    sorrow over their death; and he sacrifices to them with
    solemnity."
• A bottom up obligation- to serve the parents and ancestors from the son or daughter.
• Correctness of children’s behaviour are measured by the moral standard- that is, the filial behaviour
• Is the beginning of Ren (Benevolence) and Yi (Righteousness)- the human virtue.
孝

甲骨文像“子”承老人行走，老人仅以长发“艹”表示，不如金文中老人形象较完整，但用扶持老人来表达“孝”，原意是一致的。
順

水水

頁頁頁
Our Experience
(the Vagus Centre)
Filial Piety and its cultural meaning

• Two constructs:
  – 孝道 Filial Piety (the overall concept of respect)- the start of a person’s virtue
  – 孝順 (Filial obligation- the action to fulfil the filial piety requirement)

• Modification of filial relationship in the modern world
  – Filial piety as a traditional belief
  – Everyday practice of Filial obligation is undergoing changes due to:
    • the recent Chinese history (building economy)- money means love
    • “modernisation” eg One Child Policy, Nucleus family- does filial relationship still means bottom up or top down
Elderly- life after migration

- Moral standard changed and lack of governance in a new Country subject to interpretation

- In-law conflicts
  - Arguments, verbal abuse

- Intrusion to adult children’s privacy
  - Over-worries and “curiosity” about children's well being

- Loss of power from parents
  - Language
  - Unfamiliar with the social and legal system
  - Shame and poor networking
  - No mediators
  - Financial issues, retirement = no longer “a money machine”, obliged to contribute by using superannuation income (or benefits).
  - Being dumped with grandchildren
Prevention within the Chinese community

• Education, education and education—an ongoing process
  – via multi media campaign

• Encourage reporting by helping the elderly to demystify the meaning of shame, filial obligation to the family (top down approach)
Views of Chinese elderly
How to keep them safe

• Self sufficiency- keeping money under their account
• Maintaining good healthy and independence- no need to be looked after or cared for
• Networking for mutual support and sharing their stories
• Acceptance- the cultural differences between NZ and China, the generation gaps; the ageing process
Thank you
Bottom up Vs Top Down relationship

• Bottom up-
  – Serving parents, unconditional adherence to parental advice
  – Marriage (following parental instruction) as a way to fulfil obligation

• Top down
  – Meeting children’s needs by parents
  – Taking care of grandchildren after retirement
  – More obligation from parents than from children to parents
West and East

Individualistic VS. Collaborative

Retirement lifestyle
Primary Bonding