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The care system of Taiwanese intergenerational caregiving of older people: Disruption and disharmony across the generations

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Internationally the family is pivotal to care systems designed for older people, especially in community-based care. Such systems focus on the needs of older people and primary caregiver and fail to take account of other significant caregivers who contribute to and are affected by the caregiving experience. Similarly research also tends to focus on caregiver and care recipient dyadic relationship whereas, for example, in modern Taiwan changing family structures and increased life expectancy of older people has extended caregiving responsibilities beyond dyadic relationships across three or more generations. An unacknowledged aged care system has burgeoned, particularly in low income countries; reliant on intergenerational caregiving with its impact on families' lives is unknown. A Taiwanese study aimed to explore the caregiving impact on families across multiple generations. Using a qualitative multiple case study design, 12 families (32 participants) were recruited through Taiwanese community services. Families represented three generations and included 11 frail older people; 3 spouse caregivers; 10 adult children; and 8 grandchildren caregivers. Data collection began with a genogram and eco-map to map individual participants support networks and relationships followed by individual semi structured interviews. To allow a more systematic and rigorous analytical process was used. Findings showed that the intergenerational caregiving experience was a dichotomous relationship between intergenerational disruption/disharmony and intergenerational connection/harmony. Disruptions were a result of divergent caregiving values as traditional and neo-filial norms collided leading to intergenerational disharmony. Families attempted to work around these differences by reframing the way they lived and cared to develop harmonious kinships. Formal care systems functioned on the assumption that families would provide care for the older person but contributed little to assist families maintain their expected roles. If health care services actively worked with these families then such disruption and disharmony which threatened their capacity to care could be ameliorated.

Biography

Y F Lien has 10-years of experience as a Nurse and Practitioner in Acute Care Setting. In 2002, she commenced work as Lecturer in undergraduate and post-graduate nursing programs at Meihou University, Taiwan. In 2013, she completed her PhD at La Trobe University, Australia. Her research is in aged care with a particular interest in caregivers.

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