

New report gives recommendations on caring for seniors at home



Supporting the personal choices of seniors while making sure their safety is not compromised often involves managing the risks for a senior living independently. PHOTO: ST FILE

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SINGAPORE - When 84-year-old Mr Tan (not his real name), who has dementia, could no longer be cared for at a senior care centre, his children came together to discuss options for their father's care.

Sharing the responsibility of caregiving between the primary caregiver and family, and establishing new dimensions of longstanding relationships - such as taking turns to run errands for the elderly - were suggestions presented in a new report, *Good Care At Home*.

The report was produced by the National University of Singapore (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine's Centre for Biomedical Ethics.

The report details recommendations on how to give the best care for seniors at home, from both social and ethical perspectives.

It aims to provide ethical standards when providing care at home.

Said Associate Professor Jacqueline Chin, one of the authors of the report: "Many people who give care to older adults are not professionals. Most are family members, domestic workers, neighbours and community volunteers.

"While there are limits to holding them to professional performance standards, the report discusses appropriate standards that can be taken."

Other suggestions include continuing to support a senior's independence and protecting migrant domestic workers.

Supporting the personal choices of seniors while making sure their safety is not compromised often involves managing the risks for a senior living independently.

For instance, limiting a senior's movement at home to avoid falls could also limit their independence in other ways.

Trade-offs between safety and agency should be done in a reasonable way, the report suggested.

In some circumstances, it may be more convenient and affordable to modify their flats to increase their safety and independence.

The report also suggested more welfare protection for migrant domestic workers, whose duties as caregiver and their household chores may not be clearly defined at home.

The line between the domestic helpers' roles is also blurred as they work closely with family members, who describe the workers as being "like family" and may expect them to take on more responsibility.

The report, which had funding support from the Lien Foundation, drew on interviews and workshops with more than 170 health and social care workers over three years, from 2015 to 2017.

It is a follow-up of the centre's earlier casebook - *Caring For Older People In An Ageing Society* - that discussed issues faced by those who care for the elderly.

Ms Peh Kim Choo, chief executive of Tsao Foundation, a Singapore-based non-profit organisation dedicated to aged care and ageing issues, said: "The report benefits various groups, including policymakers, service providers, families and seniors in understanding the social dimensions of good care in an ageing society and the expanded care roles and responsibilities of the community."

The report can be assessed at <http://cbme.nus.edu.sg/>