CUHK Centre for Bioethics Webinar Series

Seminar on "AI and Robots for Health – Promises and Concerns"

9 July 2021 (Fri)
10:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. (Hong Kong Time) /
7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m. on 8 July 2021 (Thu) (US/Canada Pacific Time)
Online via Zoom

Abstracts & Biographies of Speakers/Discussants

Prof. Nancy JECKER

"My Friend the Robot: Reducing Social Isolation and Loneliness to Improve Health"

This presentation argues for the possibility of friendship with silicon-based electronic agents like sociable robots. I first motivate the need for robot friendship by pointing to an epidemic of social isolation and loneliness that is contributing to all-cause mortality at a level that matches well documented clinical risk factors, such as smoking, and eclipses others, such as obesity, I raise the question, can robots help? I propose that sociable robots can help stem the tide of social isolation and loneliness and offer an account of what this might means that appeals to the notion of 'e friendship. The presentation will discuss the qualities human users would need to bring to robot-human relationships to enable e-friendship and the design features e-friendship capable robots would require. The presentation closes by defends e-friendship against its critics.

Nancy S. Jecker is a Professor of Bioethics and Humanities at the University of Washington School of Medicine and Fulbright U.S. Scholar for South Africa (2021-2022). She holds Visiting Professorships at the University of Johannesburg Department of Philosophy and the Chinese University of Honk Kong Centre for Bioethics.

Prof. Jecker is a two-time recipient of the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science International Fellowship and a three-time Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship awardee. Prof. Jecker serves on the Board of Directors for the International Association of Bioethics (2019-2022).

Prof. Jecker's research explores individual and societal aging, with attention to justice, human dignity, medical futility, and global perspectives. Prof. Jecker has published over 200 articles and 4 books. Her most recent book, *Ending Midlife. Bias: New Values for Old Age* (Oxford University Press, 2020), coins the term *midlife bias* to refer to the privileging of midlife values across the lifespan.

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Prof. Anita HO

"Live Like Nobody is Watching: Paradoxes in AI Home Health Monitoring"

This presentation explores how the rhetoric of independent living and healthy aging intersects with issues around resource scarcity in fueling AI health monitoring for older adults. Contextualizing the discussion against the backdrop of an aging population, changing family patterns, and inadequate social or system support, this presentation examines the opportunities and ethical challenges in using AI health monitoring to enhance older adults' ability to live in their homes safely while reducing caregiver burdens. Looking through a relational lens, this presentation explores the ethical and socio-relational implications for AI health monitoring in a multi-cultural society, including care relationships between older adults and family or professional caregivers. It cautions the possibilities that uncritical implementation of such technology without systemic improvement in the care environment may paradoxically exacerbate caregiver burden and isolation of older adults, disguised as promotion of autonomy and privacy.

Anita Ho is a bioethicist and health services researcher with a unique combined academic training and experience in philosophy/bioethics, public health, and business. She is currently an Associate Professor at the Centre for Applied Ethics at the University of British Columbia and in the Bioethics Program at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), a Scientist at the Centre for Health Evaluation and Outcome Sciences (CHÉOS), and the Regional Director of Ethics in Northern California for Providence Health. An international scholar and author of more than 70 publications, Anita's research focuses on the ethical dimensions of utilizing innovative and artificial intelligence technologies in health care, domestic and global health disparity, supportive decision making, and end-of-life care decisions. She is currently completing a book manuscript on AI health monitoring ethics, to be published by Oxford University Press. She is also working on a project as a Fellow at Emerson Collective on the use of digital monitoring during the COVID pandemic.

Prof. Helen MENG

Helen MENG is Patrick Huen Wing Ming Professor of Systems Engineering and Engineering Management at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Her research interests include AI for speech and language technologies to support multilingual and multimodal human-computer interactions, as well as big data decision analytics. She leads the interdisciplinary research team that received the first Theme-based Research Scheme Project in Artificial Intelligence in 2019 from the HKSAR Government's Research Grants Council. She is Head of the Curriculum Development Team in the CUHK-JC AI for the Future Project, which has developed the courseware for pre-tertiary AI education being taught in a growing number of participating secondary schools across Hong Kong.

Helen received all her degrees from MIT. She is the Founding Director of the CUHK Ministry of Education-Microsoft Key Laboratory of Human-Centric Computing and Interface Technologies (since 2005) and Stanley Ho Big Data Decision Analytics Research Centre (since 2013). Her awards include the Ministry of Education Higher Education Outstanding Scientific Research Output Awards, ISCA Distinguished Lecturer and IEEE SPS Leo L. Beranek Meritorious Service Award. Helen serves as an elected member of the AI4SDGs AI for Children Working Group. She is a Fellow of IEEE, ISCA, HKIE and HKCS.

Prof. Alexandre ERLER

<u>Alexandre Erler</u> is a philosopher studying the ethical implications of new technologies with the potential to significantly transform society and the human condition, including genetic interventions and direct interventions into the brain (using drugs, brain stimulation, and other tools). He completed a doctorate in Philosophy at the University of Oxford. He is now a Research Assistant Professor in Philosophy and Bioethics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He has written on various ethical and political issues raised by biomedical technologies, including their potential impact on human identity and authenticity. His work has been published in journals such as *Bioethics*, AJOB *Neuroscience*, the *American Journal of Bioethics*, *Neuroethics*, the *Journal of Medical Ethics* and the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*.

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