



CUHK Centre for Bioethics

“Seminar on Euthanasia”

8 February 2023 (Wed)

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (Hong Kong Time) /
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time)

Venue: Hybrid

(On site: LT4, 3/F, Cheng Yu Tung Building, CUHK; Online via Zoom)

Abstracts & Biographies of Speakers/Moderator **(by presentation order)**

Prof. Roger Chung

“Development of End-of-Life and Palliative Care in Hong Kong”

Although Hong Kong achieves the highest life expectancy in the world, its quality of death was ranked only number 22, trailing behind other major developed Asian economies of Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, and South Korea. In this presentation, we will first highlight the major barriers, issues, and gaps of end-of-life (EOL) care in different socio-ecological levels, then give an update on its recent developments, and subsequently reflect on where I think Hong Kong may stand now and in the future in terms of its EOL care.

Roger Yat-Nork Chung, PhD, MHS, is a social epidemiologist who uses the lens of biomedical ethics and justice to examine the social determinants of health and health inequalities. He is currently examining social determinants such as poverty, deprivation, socioeconomic disadvantage, environmental and housing factors, and migrant status. He is also particularly interested in the health of the vulnerable populations, including migrant workers and rare disease patients. Additionally, he is conducting research on aging-related issues, such as multimorbidity and long-term/end-of-life care. Collectively, the purpose of his research is to inform health services and public policy, domestically and beyond.

Graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a Bachelor of Arts (Public Health Sciences), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health with a Master of Health Science, and the University of Hong Kong with a Doctor of Philosophy in social and lifecourse epidemiology, he is currently an Associate Professor of the School of Public Health and Primary Care of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), Co-Director of the CUHK Centre for Bioethics, and Associate Director of the CUHK Institute of Health Equity. He is also the inaugural US National Academy of Medicine (NAM) International Health Policy Fellow (2018-22), studying the issues of health equity, social determinants of healthy longevity, and global vaccine policies to counter pandemic threats. He has had more than 100 peer-reviewed international publications and have been awarded with numerous research grants of over US\$10 million as Principal and Co-investigators.



Dr. John Zhong

“Research on Assisted Dying and Euthanasia in Hong Kong and Asia”

This presentation reviews the literature on the practice of euthanasia in four Asian settings: Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and mainland China. It will firstly define the concept of euthanasia. Secondly, it will talk about the legal statuses of euthanasia in these places. Thirdly, it will discuss the general public’s attitude toward euthanasia and its demographic associations. Based on this review, it finds out 1. the physicians in East Asia generally object to active euthanasia but support passive euthanasia, while patients in different countries have different attitudes toward euthanasia; 2. male is more positive about euthanasia than female; 3. there is a growing tendency in East Asia that the general public prefers active euthanasia than passive euthanasia; 4. the relief of family’s burden is a common reason for the patients in East Asia to choose euthanasia; 5. religious beliefs have a significant association with people’s negative attitude toward euthanasia; 6. the ones with high education in mainland China tend to support euthanasia, while the ones with high education in South Korea tend to object to euthanasia and support active pains control.

John Zhong is currently a postdoctoral Fellow in the CUHK Centre for Bioethics. He received his PhD degree from the Faculty of Law in the University of Hong Kong by studying the theories of punishment and developed a new forfeiture thesis in justifying the moral right to punish from Kantianism. John also used to study in the Department of Philosophy in Sun Yat-sen University and acquired his BSc degree from Oklahoma State University. John is particularly interested in the topics about right to life and human dignity. He is currently studying the moral justification of the liberal view of euthanasia and the moral permissibility of physicians’ participation in capital punishment.

Prof. Hon-Lam LI

“On Some Arguments Against the Decriminalization of Assisted Suicide”

As Gerald Dworkin once remarked, the problem of physician-assisted death is unlike other bioethical problems in that it is not a difficult one to resolve. Agreeing with Dworkin, I trust that the case for the decriminalization of assisted death—for terminally ill patients who experience unbearable suffering and insist on the termination of their lives—is clear enough. Given time constraint, I shall examine four arguments against the decriminalization of assisted death. The first argument is that killing of any kind is wrong, period. The second is the theoretical version of the Slippery Slope Argument: one of its premises is that there is no theoretical justification to allow assisted death for only terminally ill patients suffering miserably and insisting on dying but not to cases that are less clear or more controversial. The third is the practical version of the Slippery Slope Argument, according to which if assisted death for voluntary cases is allowed, it would only be a matter of time before nonvoluntary and involuntary cases will be allowed. Finally, I shall consider the objection that if assisted death is decriminalized, *some* older terminally ill patients would feel external pressure (from hospitals, their children, or society), or internal pressure (out of a sense of moral duty), or both, to opt for assisted death.



Hon-Lam Li (BA, Princeton; MA, *Oxon.*; Ph.D., Cornell) had been a practicing barrister-at-law in Hong Kong before embarking on a career as a philosopher. Hon was a Visiting Fellow at the Edmond & Lily Safra Center for Ethics, Harvard University for the Fall of 2022. He is Emeritus Professor, Department of Philosophy, the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests are practical ethics (including bioethics), ethics, political philosophy, and philosophy of law. His publications have appeared in *The American Journal of Bioethics* and other international journals. His articles, “Contractualism and Punishment” and “Contractualism and the Death Penalty,” are respectively the fourth and fifth “most read” articles published in *Criminal Justice Ethics*. Hon’s publications on assisted suicide include “Rawlsian Political Liberalism, Public Reason, and Bioethics” in Hon-Lam Li and Michael Campbell, eds., *Public Reason and Bioethics: Three Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), and “What We Owe to Terminally Ill Patients: The Option of Physician-Assisted Suicide,” *Asian Bioethics Review* 8: no. 3 (2016).

Prof. Nancy Jecker

“Medical Futility and Physician-Assisted Death”

In many respects, modern medicine has made it harder to die. When continued medical interventions are no longer beneficial, what does the physician owe the patient? This presentation examines ethical arguments in support of physician assisted death after withdrawal of futile interventions. The arguments appeal to the physicians role in extending life, the moral equivalence of acting and omitting, and respecting patient dignity.

Nancy Jecker is a Professor of Bioethics and Humanities at the University of Washington School of Medicine and Adjunct Professor at the University of Washington School of Law, Department of Global Health, and Department of Philosophy. Prof. Jecker was elected President of the International Association of Bioethics (2022-present) and serves as a member of its Board of Directors (2019-present). She holds Visiting Professorships at the University of Johannesburg Department of Philosophy and the Chinese University of Hong Kong Centre for Bioethics.

She is a Fulbright U.S. Scholar (selected 2021/22); two time recipient of the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science international fellowship (selected 2020/21 and 2018/19); and three time Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship awardee (selected 2020/21, 2018/19, and 1987/88).

Prof. Jecker’s research explores global bioethics, justice, and moral philosophy. Her research spans a range of topics, most notably healthcare allocation, capabilities and human dignity, sub-Saharan African philosophy, intergenerational ethics, and personhood. 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.



Dr. Derrick Au (Moderator)

Derrick Kit-Sing Au is Ex-Director of the CUHK Centre for Bioethics (2017-2022) and current Centre Advisor. He received medical education at Brown University and postgraduate training in geriatric medicine in Hong Kong. He served in clinical services in public hospitals then executive positions in the Hong Kong Hospital Authority (HA) for three decades before joining CUHK. Dr Au is current Convenor of the Ethics Advisory Committee of the Hong Kong Genome Institute and has served in ethics committees of HA and the Medical Council of Hong Kong. Dr. Au is also a writer and columnist, writing on bioethics and medical humanities.

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