

Christine Ceci, Kristín Björnsdóttir & Mary Ellen Purkis (eds.) (2011). *Perspectives on Care at Home for Older People*. New York: Routledge, 194 pp. ISBN 978 0 415 89590 3 (hardback)

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This edited volume constitutes an excellent addition to debates on domiciliary care for older persons. Recent decades have witnessed an unprecedented growth of frail older persons who require some level of personalised care, if they are not to enter long-term care. In this respect, a key challenge facing all social systems is to provide good quality of care that at the same time follows the values of sustainability and equity. *Perspectives on Care at Home for Older People* offers a critical analysis of how to best respond to the perceived challenges of home care for frail older adults, providing outstanding responses to two crucial questions: First, how do the actualities of people's daily lives articulate with ideological, practical and programmatic discourses and material conditions? And second, what are the conditions of possibility for "care" where the frailties of older people matter? It answers such dilemmas by offering case studies (both policy- and practice-oriented empirical studies) from countries that share a basic orientation to social welfare, namely Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The chapters also set out a critical agenda for the development of equitable and sustainable practices in present times.

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The nine chapters of this book are divided into three parts, preceded by a foreword by Carl May and an introductory chapter by the editors. May's foreword frames the context and grapples with the conditions of the possibility for good care, founding his case on three basic principles. First, the "patient is not enough", arguing that the burden of illness now demands more than a co-operative patient, instead it requires a compliant network. Second, "illness is plural", suggesting that in a world defined by multiple chronic co-morbidities, sickness is experienced as an assemblage of management projects rather than a phenomenological unity. And third, "the co-ordination of co-ordination is not a paradox", since the multiplication of co-ordination gives recognition to the complexity of contemporary healthcare. Subsequently, the editors provide an introductory chapter in which they highlight the aims and objectives of the book and, quite originally, provide transcripts of conversation excerpts between them and other authors during a preparatory meeting. These transcripts are very illuminating and serve to break down the complexity of the book's intentions into more reader-friendly assertions.

The first chapter in the primary part of the book ("Home"), "Ageing, independence, and community" by Mary Ellen Purkis, seeks to answer the following question: "as elders age and become more frail, what sorts of accommodations can be made to their locations in community to enhance opportunities for independent living?" (p. 23). Drawing upon personal experience, Purkis underlines how knowledge is translated into each situation in such a way that it resonates with the preferences and values of older people, so that it remains fundamental to accommodating people's singularities. The second chapter by Joanna Latimer, "Home care and frail older people: relational extension and the art of dwelling", is an exploratory and discursive account. Its illuminating and constructive arguments cannot be done justice in the short space available here, but in essence the chapter continues to transform notions of care and caregiving based upon a less-functional notion of care and the involvement of practitioners, as well as older people as embodied persons in relations. This part closes with the chapter "Homes for care: reconfiguring care relations and practices", by Isabel Dyck and Kim England's, which observes how service workers are told in advance what they are expected to do, whilst not being allowed to attend to anything unusual that comes

up during their visits. Indeed, much of the work is prescribed in advance, and work that does not reflect this script does not take place.

The chapter "To work out what works best: what is good in home care" by Christine Ceci opens the second part ("Care"). Ceci shows how, in an attempt to constrain costs, methods have been developed to ration services such as increasingly detailed rules that dictate service availability. She constructs a strong argument against this, in favour of treating older persons as rational, choosing actors, with independence as an inherent activity and normal state, on the basis that no one can sustain existence without connection to a diverse assortment of socio-material structures and supports. In the fifth chapter, Davina Allen examines the ways in which hospital staff mediate opportunities for hospitalised patients to return to their homes, with or without formal supports. Her paper demonstrates an interesting and potentially problematic gap in understanding the extent to which frail elders function more effectively within their own home environments than may be evident in the institutional context. The final chapter in this part, "Assisting the frail elderly to live a good life through home care practice", authored by Kristín Björnsdóttir, reports on an ethnographic study focusing on the everyday life of the frail elderly receiving home care in Reykjavik, as well as the enactment of practices by official service workers. The way in which flexible organisational structure allowed the staff to explore and respond to each patient's needs and wishes is noteworthy, as is the way in which flexibility became a threat to quality care, if the workers had not developed clear ideals.

The third part ("Practices") opens with the chapter "Who can be against quality?", by Hanne Marlene Dahl, in which she approaches the topic of home care from the standpoint of policy makers. This chapter demonstrates the effects and impacts imposed through a discourse of quality rather than actual care for those responsible for providing assistance to frail elders in the community, and more worrying, how in many countries the commitment to provide comprehensive public-home services has been replaced by a concern for the cost of public services. In the seventh chapter, "Creating home care recipients: using a categorization as a tool in home care case management", Anna Olaison focuses on two case examples to illustrate the categories that take precedence in describing people's needs for home care. These cases illustrate how categorisation plays a significant

role in institutional welfare settings and functions as a tool for sense making and co-ordination of perspectives and activities, with case files generally ignoring the interactional dynamics that an older adult is located in. In Olaison's words, "the home care case files are controlled by a fixed organisational frame in the striving for standardization" (p. 168). In the final chapter, "The making of medico-managerial care work culture in public home care for the elderly", Lea Henriksson and Sirpa Wrede consider institutional shifts in the development of municipal home care for older adults, whilst paying particular attention to how the universalist welfare state reformed Finnish care work culture and the position of frontline carers. Noting how the care-friendly and the care-worker-friendly universalistic welfare state became questioned and dismantled through neo-liberal policies implemented since the 1990s, the authors underline how in the face of increasing inequalities there must be a renewal of concern about social justice and how it is to be distributed.

In sum, this publication has much to offer as a comparative account of perspectives on care at home for older people. It suffices as a comprehensive introduction to diverse empirical realities in domiciliary and personalised care. Its relatively brief and concise chapters make it possible for the reader to grasp an erudite understanding of the normative and moral qualities of care at home for older persons in diverse geographical settings. *Perspectives on Care at Home for Older People* is an eminently readable and accessible book and will be warmly welcomed by academics and researchers in social and public policy, health and social care and welfare economics. It will also be of interest to policy makers and non-governmental organisations involved in welfare and social care provision and will provide a useful source for students on undergraduate and graduate programmes. My only qualm is its price. At £89, it is surely out of reach of the average student/researcher, as well as scholars from low- and middle-income countries. This is lamentable as the publication is currently one of the best attempts at understanding why patterns of social care differ between and within countries, and the consequences of these variations.