

Preface

This volume is the first in a new Springer series, *Ethics and Health Policy*. It reflects on the challenges that ethics and health policy face in aging societies. Against the background of an ever further increasing life expectancy, and taking the huge impact of aging populations on healthcare and health policy into account, it is hard to imagine a more appropriate subject to start this series with.

Although life in itself is highly valued by many, aging—both in its individual and in its societal dimensions—is of often experienced as a mixed blessing. In this volume, the tension between valuing longer lives and coping with the decline that currently comes with age is considered from a wide variety of views and scholarship on the ethical aspects of aging. It includes reflections on the public and personal views on (good) aging; biomedical attempts to understand and influence the aging process; and on (public) health policy in an aging society.

The volume is in large part the result of an international conference on *Ethics and Aging*, held in Amsterdam on 17 and 18 March 2011. The conference was organised by the department of Medical Ethics and Philosophy of Medicine of ErasmusMC University Medical Center, with kind support of the Dutch Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). The success of the conference inspired the idea to bring all the perspectives and views expressed and discussed there together into a comprehensive volume.

We are very pleased that most of the speakers at the conference have elaborated their lectures into contributions to this volume and we are also grateful to those authors who have developed their short comments into full chapters. We hope that the multi-disciplinary, open and positive-critical atmosphere of inquiry that marked the conference is reflected in the present volume.

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We believe this volume will offer the reader an interesting and inspiring collection of perspectives on the mixed blessings of growing old; and we hope this will contribute to further productive discussions on ethics and health policy in aging societies.

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