Study on the Current Situation of Community Elderly in Different Countries of the World and Policy Recommendations

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Abstract

The article describes that under the background of aging, countries all over the world have adopted community-based elderly care services as a transitional mode to alleviate the pressure of social aging. This article focuses on analysing the advanced experience of community-based elderly care in typical countries such as Japan, Northern Europe, Australia, Canada, and China. It also provides an in-depth analysis of the general difficulties in the development of community-based elderly care services such as insufficient service supply, shortage of professionals, difficulty in meeting diversified needs, lack of funds, and incomplete community support system. In response to the general difficulties, policy recommendations are given to strengthen the supply of community elderly services through multi-party cooperation, enhance the training of professionals, provide diversified services, integrate multi-party capital to support the development of community elderly services, and establish a comprehensive community elderly service system. It is intended to provide policy references for different countries in the face of the social pressures brought about by the aging of society.

Keywords

Community-based elderly services, current situation, difficulties, policy recommendations

With the improvement of economic, scientific, technological, and medical standards, people’s life expectancy has greatly increased, which has brought about a serious social problem of aging. According to the data of the World Bank, the proportion of the global population aged 60 and above in the total population has increased from 8.1 percent in 1990 to 11.9 percent in 2020 and is expected to reach 21.5 percent in 2050 (Shi C, Wu H, & Chiu Y-H, 2020). In the face of such a grim situation, countries have adopted various methods to cope with the problem of ageing, among which the transition mode of community-based care has been increasingly valued and developed by various countries. Some countries have already established a relatively perfect community care system. This paper systematically compiles the community care experience of some typical countries, carefully analyses the problems existing in the current mainstream community care model, and gives some suggestions for improvement in response to the problems.

1. Analysis of the current situation of community-based elderly care services in countries around the world

1.1 Japan

Japan is one of the more mature countries in the development of community-based elderly care, with a policy of
"integrated community care". The Government provides support and services, including day care, home nursing care, health counselling, rehabilitation training, and so on, to elderly people and people in need who live nearby through the establishment of community-integrated service centres. At the same time, Japan has implemented a long-term care insurance system to provide long-term care services for older persons over the age of 65 and persons with specific illnesses or physical disabilities. Japan is actively promoting the integration of medical and nursing care, and establishing a mechanism for multidisciplinary teamwork to provide more comprehensive and personalised services for the elderly and those in need. The Japanese Government provides support and training to family carers in various ways to help them take better care of their family members and improve their caring skills and mental health. This helps reduce the burden of family caregiving and promotes family and social stability. Overall, Japan's policy of "integrated community care" contributes to the establishment of a person-centred, caring and supportive long-term care system that improves the quality of life of older persons and persons in need at home and in the community.

1.2 Nordic countries

The Nordic countries have been leading the way in community-based care for the elderly, which generally has a coverage rate of more than 80 percent, and in some areas can even reach more than 90 percent. This means that most older persons are able to obtain the support and services they need in the community, delaying or avoiding admission to nursing homes or medical institutions. The current state of its development is characterised by the following features: First, emphasis is being placed on the provision of elderly care services in the community, so that, through the establishment of a comprehensive community-based elderly care system, older persons can receive the support and services they need close to home. The second is to provide diversified elderly care services, including day care, home care, community care, and home care, to meet the needs of the elderly at different levels (Chen, Sonia Chien-I et al., 2020). Thirdly, the Government has invested considerable resources in community-based elderly care and has regulated elderly care service providers to ensure service quality and safety.

Below are a few good examples:

The Free Life Centre in Denmark: This is a community-based elderly care project in Denmark that aims to provide an autonomous and free living environment for older persons. The centre provides a variety of services, such as day care, rehabilitation, cultural activities, etc., to help the elderly remain active and social.

Neighbourhood Care in Sweden: Sweden has implemented the Neighbourhood Care Programme, which provides daily living assistance and social support to the elderly through community volunteers. This model emphasises community cohesion and mutual support and helps older people to be cared for close to home.

1.3 Australia

Ageing in the community in Australia is dominated by the Aged Care Programme (Inacio, Maria C. et al., 2021). Older people are first assessed, usually on age requirements, health status, and place of residence. The assessment is usually conducted by a professional assessor or a community service organisation. Based on the results of the assessment, a personalized service plan tailored to the needs of the elderly will be formulated to determine the type and frequency of services required. Older persons can choose suitable service providers according to their needs and preferences, which may be community service organisations, private organisations or personal care workers, and so on. Older persons receive the services they need, such as day care, home care, community care, and so on, according to the personalised service programmes. Service providers regularly assess the needs of older persons and the effectiveness of their services, and adjust the service programmes accordingly to ensure that older persons receive the most appropriate care and support. The Australian Government regulates and monitors service providers participating in the Aged Care Programme to ensure that the services they provide meet the required standards and quality requirements. Participants in Australia's Aged Care Programmes generally pay a portion of the cost, but the Australian Government provides subsidies or allowances to reduce the cost, depending on the financial circumstances of the participant.

1.4 Canada

Canada promotes ageing in the community through the Ageing Support Programme. The federal government provides financial support to seniors through programmes such as the Old Age Canada (OAS) and the Canada Supplementary Index (GIS). The OAS provides a basic pension to Canadians 65 years of age and older, the amount of which
varies according to length of residency and income level; the GIS provides an additional pension to lower-income Canadians 65 years of age and older, designed to help them live a more stable life. Each province in Canada is responsible for implementing and administering the specifics of the Aging Support Programme (Mcneil-Gauthier, Anne-Lou et al., 2023). Service providers are responsible for offering a variety of services, such as health care, social support and financial counselling, to meet the different needs of seniors.

1.5 China

Community care for the elderly in China mainly consists of government support for the construction of facilities such as community centres for the elderly, day-care centres and activity centres for the elderly. It also encourages and supports community organisations, social organisations, enterprises and other institutions to provide elderly care services, including home-based elderly care services and community-based elderly care services, in order to meet the diversified elderly care needs of the elderly. The Chinese Government also attaches importance to the training of personnel for community-based elderly care services, improving their professionalism and the quality of their services, as well as strengthening the supervision and evaluation of elderly care services to ensure service quality. Each year, the government provides financial subsidies and tax incentives to community-based elderly care service providers, while encouraging social capital to invest in the elderly care service industry to reduce the burden of elderly care on the elderly.

Here are a few examples of community-based elderly care in China.

Beijing Fengtai District Community Elderly Service Centre: This centre is one of the institutions in Fengtai District, Beijing, that provides elderly services for the elderly. It has facilities such as activity rooms for the elderly, gymnasiums, and medical treatment rooms, and provides services such as day-care, rehabilitation care, and cultural and recreational activities, which are welcomed by the elderly in the community.

Community Elderly Service Station, Panyu District, Guangzhou: Located in the community of Panyu District, this service station provides home care services and medical care for the elderly, as well as a variety of cultural activities and health talks to enrich the spiritual life of the elderly.

2. Difficulties faced by community-based elderly care services around the world

2.1 Inadequate service provision

As the population ages, the demand for community-based elderly care services is increasing. Many older persons want to be able to receive elderly care services close to their homes or in their communities, which has led to increased demand for community-based elderly care, but limited resources have resulted in an inadequate supply of services. China, for example, has experienced a growing problem of inadequate supply of community-based elderly care services as its population ages. Although the government has been increasing its investment in and support for community-based elderly care services, there are still problems such as insufficient service coverage and poor service quality. By 2020, China's population aged 60 and above will reach 265 million, of which 34.34 million will be aged 80 and above. According to the Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Construction of a Long-Term Care Service System for the Elderly issued by China's National Health and Wellness Commission, the demand gap for community-based elderly care services in China is as high as 1 billion visits (Liu, Yi et al., 2022). This means that China needs to provide community-based elderly care services far beyond the current level of supply.

2.2 Shortage of specialised personnel

The provision of high-quality community-based elderly care services requires professional healthcare workers and social workers, but in many countries, there is a shortage of these to meet the demand. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), by 2021, about 9 million additional healthcare workers, caregivers, and social workers will be needed globally to provide long-term care and support services to meet the needs of a growing elderly population.

2.3 Diversity needs are difficult to meet

Many countries are vast, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural, and older people from different cultural backgrounds and geographical areas may have different needs and preferences in old age. An example is Australia. Australia is a multicultural country with immigrants from all over the world and thus has a very diverse ethnic composition.
According to the latest figures, there are more than 270 different ethnic and regional groups in Australia. These different ethnic groups have different cultural differences in aged care, and it is a challenge to provide aged care services that meet the needs of older people from various cultural backgrounds (Boniol, Mathieu et al., 2022).

2.4 Funding shortfalls

The current state of the funding gap for community-based ageing varies from country to country, but there is a general underfunding problem. As population ageing intensifies, spending on old-age care continues to rise in all countries. Community-based elderly care services require substantial financial investment, but the social welfare systems in many countries have failed to keep pace with the increase in demand, and many older persons are in poorer financial situations and need to rely on financial support provided by the Government or society, resulting in a funding gap. The provision of quality health and care services also requires significant financial support. Some developing countries have difficulty in providing sufficient funds to support community-based services for the elderly because of their poor fiscal situation and need to rely on international assistance or support from other countries to alleviate financial pressures.

2.5 Inadequate community support systems

In some countries, community support systems are inadequate, with problems such as chaotic management, waste of resources, and lack of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, resulting in the ineffective provision of services and rendering the rights and interests of older persons ineffectively safeguarded. For example, in the case of community-based elderly services in India, many older persons are unable to receive timely medical treatment and care due to insufficient medical resources and inadequate service facilities. At the same time, some nursing homes suffer from poor management and poor service quality, leading to a decline in the quality of life of older persons.

3. Policy recommendations for community-based elderly care services in countries around the world

3.1 Multi-party Co-operation to Strengthen Community Elderly Service Provision

Strengthening co-operation with families and communities. The Government, communities, and families can work together to share the responsibility for community elderly services and form a synergy. At the same time, co-ordination and co-operation among different departments should be strengthened to form policy linkages and enhance the overall effectiveness of community elderly services. Social participation and volunteer services should be encouraged, and volunteer teams should be established and nurtured to provide companionship, care, and assistance to the elderly, so as to alleviate the pressure of an insufficient supply of community elderly services.

3.2 Strengthen the training of professionals

Professional training is conducted and systematic and comprehensive training programmes are provided, including theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and professional ethics, so as to equip community service workers with professionalism. At the same time, community service workers are allowed to learn and grow in their actual work and improve their professionalism. The performance of community service workers is regularly evaluated and assessed, and problems are identified for timely improvement to promote professional growth. Incentives and reward mechanisms are established to encourage community service workers to be proactive, industry norms and standards are established, the duties and requirements of community service workers are clarified, and the quality of service and professionalism are improved.

3.3 Diversified service offerings

Diversified service programmes, including health services, psychological support, rehabilitation care, culture, and recreation, are provided to meet the needs of the elderly in different aspects. In response to different needs, personalised service plans are formulated according to the health conditions, interests, and living habits of the elderly. Flexible and diversified service modes are carried out, including door-to-door services, community activities, remote health counselling, etc., so as to make it easier for the elderly to choose and enjoy the services.
3.4 Integrating multi-party capital to support the development of community-based elderly services

Governments can increase financial input into community-based elderly services by providing subsidies, incentives, or project funding to support the infrastructure and operation of community-based elderly services. Social organisations, enterprises, and individuals are encouraged to participate in community elderly care services and can provide financial support through donations, sponsorships, and cooperation. Financial institutions are attracted to participate in the field of community elderly services by providing financial products such as financing, loans, and insurance to support the construction and development of elderly service projects. Cross-border co-operation between different industries and fields can be carried out to jointly promote the development of community-based elderly care services, for example, with medical institutions, educational institutions, and cultural institutions. The establishment of a socialised pension insurance system is being promoted to attract more social capital to participate in elderly care services and improve the sustainability and coverage of services.

3.5 Establishment of a comprehensive community-based elderly care service system

The Government has formulated relevant policies and plans to clarify the direction, objectives, and key areas of development of community-based elderly care services and to provide guidance for the construction of the system. Establishing a sound organisational structure for community elderly services, including community elderly centres, volunteer organisations, professional service agencies, etc., to form a service network. To establish an information management system to achieve comprehensive supervision and management of community elderly services and improve service efficiency and quality. Establishing assessment and supervision mechanisms for community elderly services, regularly assessing the quality and effectiveness of services, and promptly adjusting and improving the content and mode of services.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the development status of community care for the elderly varies from country to country around the world, but the general trend is that it is gradually gaining attention and development. However, in the process of development, there are still problems such as insufficient service supply, shortage of professionals, difficulty in meeting diversified needs, shortage of funds, and unsound community support system. Therefore, countries should take advantage of their own shortcomings in the development of community elderly service, compare the development experience of advanced countries, strengthen the supply of community elderly service through multi-party cooperation, strengthen the training of professionals, provide diversified services, integrate multi-party capital to support the development of community elderly service and establish a perfect community elderly service system. The impact of ageing in the world.

References


