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Community-based Home Care Aging in China

Current Situation Development Strategies

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Abstract

In contemporary China, the phenomenon of population ageing is becoming increasingly salient. The rapid growth of the elderly population has led to a concomitant rise in the prominence of the issue of elderly care, which is now a matter of growing public concern. The implementation of the community-based elderly care model plays a pivotal role in effectively responding to the challenges brought about by an ageing society. It can provide more comprehensive and caring elderly care services for the elderly, thereby further promoting the sustainable and sound development of the elderly care cause. Presently, deficiencies persist in the provision of community-based elderly care in China. These include insufficient service supply, imperfect facility construction and a shortage of human resources. To address these issues, it is imperative for the government and all societal sectors to collaborate, refine pertinent policies, facilitate the recruitment of advanced professionals, and implement other strategies. This will ensure that the elderly receive convenient, efficient, and accurate senior care services, allowing them to enjoy a peaceful twilight years.

Keywords: Community-based elderly care; Nursing Services; Family-based elderly care

I. The Evolution of Community-Based Elderly care

1. An overview of the development of Community-based elderly care at home and abroad

The concept of community care for the elderly represents a novel approach to the provision of aged care, one that has been actively promoted by China in recent years. This model seeks to furnish the elderly with a diversified and personalised level of care, utilising the full spectrum of community resources, with the objective of enabling them to enjoy their twilight years within the

familiar confines of their own community. The latest data from the National Bureau of Statistics indicates that by the end of 2023, the population of China aged 60 and above reached 296.97 million, representing 21.1% of the total population. Of this figure, 216.76 million, or 15.4% of the population, were aged 65 and above, signifying the country's transition into a moderately ageing society[1].Against this background, the community-based model of ageing, a new model of ageing, shows great potential and value.

The community model of ageing encompasses not only the provision of daily care, but also the fulfilment of the physical, mental and social needs of older persons. The services provided to older persons in the community encompass a range of support services, including health monitoring, medical care, dietary care, housekeeping services, cultural and recreational services, psychological counselling, and more. The involvement of additional professionals enables the provision of comprehensive services that align with the specific requirements of older individuals.

At present, the content of our community-based elderly services is still relatively single, and can only provide basic services such as simple washing and eating, and the spiritual needs of the elderly are not met. At the same time, the quality and quantity of service personnel need to be further improved. The development of community elderly care in various regions is not balanced, and there is a shortage of community elderly care resources in some regions, making it difficult for the elderly to enjoy high-quality elderly care resources. As of 2024, there are more than 7,800 medical and nursing institutions with the qualification of medical and health institutions and for the record of nursing institutions, with a total of 2 million beds, and 87,000 pairs of medical and health institutions and nursing institutions nationwide [2]have signed a contract for cooperation, indicating that China's market for nursing institutions is stable and improving.

2. The role of community-based ageing in society

The community-based elderly care model offers a number of clear benefits to society as a whole. Firstly, it makes optimal use of community resources, thereby reducing the costs associated with the construction and operation of elderly care institutions. Consequently, this approach also has the effect of reducing the financial burden on families. Secondly, community care enables the elderly to reside in their own familiar community environment, which is conducive to the maintenance of their social relations and identity, as well as an improvement in their quality of life. Finally, the community care model is conducive to the advancement of community development and progress, as well as the enhancement of community cohesion and vitality.

Community-based models of ageing have the potential to enhance the quality of life of older individuals. Community-based elderly care facilities are equipped to provide a range of services, including healthcare, rehabilitation and long-term care, with the objective of ensuring the health and quality of life of older persons. The organisation of social activities for older persons, such as fitness, handicrafts, reading and other related activities, can facilitate the formation of social

connections and contribute to a reduction in feelings of loneliness. Assistance with activities of daily living, including shopping, cleaning and maintenance tasks. Furthermore, the community can provide accessibility aids, including wheelchairs, lifts and handrails, to facilitate mobility. Furthermore, participation in a variety of cultural and recreational activities, such as concerts, film screenings, and dance performances, can facilitate spiritual enrichment and enhance overall quality of life within the community. Furthermore, the community can facilitate the elderly's involvement in the development and governance of community facilities for the elderly, thereby enhancing their sense of participation and achievement. The table in Figure 1 shows the contents and differences between the three models of care aging at a glance. It can also be observed that the community-based home care aging model is a combination of the first two models and is more integrated and flexible.

Comparative dimension	Home Care Aging	Community Care Aging	Community-based Home Care Aging
Place	Personal residence	Community aging service facilities	Personal residence
Activity areas	Personal residence	Community aging service facilities	Personal residence and community aging service facilities
Services	None	The "Six Helps for the Elderly" service is the main one, with relatively simple content	Same as the Community Care Aging
Funding sources	Personally, Family	Focus on individuals and families, complemented by government	Same as the Community Care Aging
Operating model	Personally	Government-dominated, socially managed, relatively homogeneous model	Same as the Community Care Aging

Main features	Ageing at home, self-sufficiency	Proactively seeking services, close to home	Ageing at home, self-sufficiency,proactively seeking services, close to home
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Figure 1 :A Comparison of Three Models of Care Aging [3]

The community-based model of ageing has the potential to alleviate the burden on families. Community-based care can facilitate access to a broader range of professional care services, including daily nursing care, health monitoring, and personalised geriatric care. These services have the potential to alleviate the burden of caring for older persons at home. Community-based elderly care services establish rehabilitation facilities and provide training and professional medical care and rehabilitation personnel to support the rehabilitation and recovery of physical functions through a combination of rehabilitation training and physiotherapy. This reduces the time and effort of family members in caring for the elderly at home. Furthermore, community organisations for the elderly frequently facilitate a multitude of social and recreational activities, including educational programmes for the elderly, social gatherings such as dances and card games, and other similar initiatives. By engaging in these activities, the elderly can enhance their social integration, enrich their quality of life, and alleviate the psychological and emotional burden on their family members. The provision of standardised dietary and housing conditions can ensure the quality of life of the elderly, thereby reducing the burden on families in terms of the living conditions of the elderly in terms of meals and housing. Furthermore, elderly institutions can provide psychological counselling and support for the elderly, thereby reducing their sense of isolation and depression and assisting them in alleviating their psychological burdens.

The community-based elderly care model is a highly specialised field of practice. Community-based elderly care services identify the healthcare needs of older people through a process of assessment, which considers a number of factors, including communication skills, the living environment, health status and socialisation needs. This allows for the delivery of personalised services, including bespoke dietary options and tailored health management, in order to meet the specific requirements of the elderly. Furthermore, community-based elderly care organisations demonstrate proficiency in specific managerial competencies, including staff management and supervision, resource allocation, and quality control. The deployment of professional management capacity can guarantee the effective administration of elderly care services and the delivery of superior quality services, thereby enhancing the quality of life for the elderly.

The community ageing model has the effect of enhancing community cohesion and creating a favourable social environment, which in turn facilitates the development of a supportive social network. The community model of ageing has the potential to facilitate the formation of closer ties and mutual help networks among residents, thereby engendering a community atmosphere

of mutual support and fraternity. The residents may assume the role of carers, thereby providing support and assistance to their relatives in coping with the challenges of life. This alleviates the burden of caring for the elderly. This approach fosters a sense of trust and friendship, which benefits both the individual and the community[4]. In a community setting, older individuals have greater opportunities to engage in social interaction and participate in a range of activities, including physical exercise, dance, calligraphy, and choral singing. Such interactions facilitate the transfer of experiences and knowledge, thereby contributing to the enhancement of community culture. The older generation plays an irreplaceable role in the transmission of community culture and the safeguarding of traditions. Furthermore, learning from the elderly, who are significant repositories of cultural knowledge, can facilitate the comprehension and propagation of traditional cultural practices, as well as communication and mutual understanding between younger and older generations.

III. The following section will address the issues and challenges associated with the provision of community-based elderly care.

1. A dearth of community-based elderly services is a significant challenge.

A lack of funding is a further obstacle. The provision of an effective service necessitates an investment in community-based elderly care, including the purchase of equipment and the training of relevant technical personnel, as well as environmental improvement and construction. However, the financial resources available to the community are frequently insufficient, making it challenging to meet the investment requirements and, consequently, the care needs of the elderly[4].

A further challenge is the shortage of personnel. Community-based elderly care services require the input of professional nursing and medical personnel. However, there are still gaps in the training of professional nursing personnel, and the low social recognition of this work and low salaries have also led to a shortage of practitioners. Consequently, a greater proportion of nursing and medical personnel opt to work in hospitals and large nursing homes than in community care facilities, resulting in a dearth of personnel in the latter.

2. Inadequate construction of community-based institutions for the elderly

The construction of community-based elderly care facilities in China is currently imperfect, with many community-based elderly care institutions lacking the necessary equipment to meet the basic living needs of the elderly. The most salient issues pertain to the poor indoor environment,

inadequate living conditions and dearth of essential medical equipment and services. This not only affects the quality of life of the elderly, but also poses a risk to their physical and mental health.

In numerous communities, the inadequate state of elderly facilities is unable to meet the needs of the elderly population. With the advent of today's ageing society, it is inevitable that the relevant demand will increase. The lack of timely repair of damaged equipment, the inadequate management of daily maintenance, the absence of accessibility and safety facilities, and other factors have collectively contributed to a decline in trust in care services and environments, which have become less attractive to older individuals.

The standard of service provided in community-based elderly care facilities is inadequate and in need of improvement. The personnel providing the services in question lack the requisite professional knowledge and skills, and exhibit poor attitudes and awareness, which results in an uneven quality of service. Furthermore, the current service programme is insufficiently diversified and lacks personalised service provision, which makes it challenging to meet the diverse needs of the elderly population.

The current management structure is not standardised, and there are irregularities in the way community-based elderly care institutions are managed. The presence of unsound management systems, insufficient supervision and irregular service processes is more pronounced. Furthermore, the absence of an efficacious assessment mechanism and a reward and punishment mechanism renders it challenging to ensure the quality of service.

3. Professional Issues in Community Elderly Staffing

The development of community elderly services is an important strategy for addressing the challenges associated with an ageing population and meeting the needs of the elderly. The quality of life of the elderly and the development of society are directly influenced by the efficacy of these services. The issue of staffing in the community elderly care sector represents a significant challenge that directly impacts the quality of services provided.

(1) The issue of personnel numbers and structure

Presently, the number of personnel engaged in the provision of community aged-care services in China is relatively insufficient, particularly in the case of professional nursing staff, who are in particularly short supply. Furthermore, the personnel structure is not optimal, exhibiting considerable discrepancies in age, gender, educational background, and professional experience. This has resulted in certain challenges in the delivery of community elderly care services.

(2) Nursing skills and training issues

Nursing skills are a fundamental aspect of professional competence for personnel engaged in the

provision of community elderly care services. The development of these skills is contingent upon the availability of appropriate training opportunities. The current situation is such that the nursing skills of personnel engaged in the provision of community-based elderly care services are generally low, and that training opportunities are limited. This has a direct impact on the quality of services provided and the satisfaction of the elderly.

(3) Service Quality and Supervision Issues

The quality of service is a crucial criterion for evaluating the efficacy of community-based elderly care services. Supervision is an essential means of ensuring the quality of service. The supervisory mechanism of community elderly services in China is currently imperfect, resulting in a lack of consistency in service quality.

(4) Team building and professional moral quality issues

The current community elderly care institutions generally lack systematic team management rules, resulting in a lack of consistency in the quality of service personnel. Some personnel are merely completing tasks mechanically, without consideration for the psychological experience and spiritual condition of the elderly. In some instances, this has even manifested in the use of abusive language and, in more severe cases, physical abuse.

4. The issue of quality and standardisation in community-based elderly services

There is a significant discrepancy in the quality of services provided by community-based elderly service providers, due to the varying levels of expertise and resources available to them. Some community-based elderly care organisations demonstrate high-quality staff, positive service attitudes and adherence to professional standards, thereby providing high-quality elderly care services. Conversely, some community-based elderly care organisations exhibit low service quality due to inadequate management or the presence of service staff with limited qualifications and expertise.

The absence of uniform standards and norms for community-based elderly care services results in an inability to guarantee the content and quality of services in a fair and consistent manner. Community-based elderly care institutions have disparate requirements pertaining to service content, service standards, service processes, and other aspects. Additionally, there is a dearth of unified, standardised management practices.

The relatively chaotic development of the community elderly service market has resulted in an imperfect regulatory system and insufficient supervision, which have permitted irregularities among elderly service providers, including false promotion and inadequate services. The absence of an efficacious regulatory apparatus and rigorous law enforcement contributes to the

emergence of issues pertaining to the quality and standardisation of elderly services.

IV. Development Strategies for Community Elderly Care and Solutions to Problems

The following section will present a series of strategies for the development of community-based elderly care services, accompanied by a discussion of the challenges inherent to this endeavour. The government has introduced a new National Elderly Care Policy, which includes measures to strengthen the guarantee of care for the elderly, increase investment in the construction of facilities for the elderly at the grassroots level, and prioritise the safeguarding of the basic care needs of the elderly who are economically challenged and living with age-related incapacities or dementia. Additionally, the policy aims to establish a long-term care service system as soon as possible. Furthermore, a risk-sharing and prevention mechanism has been established through the implementation of a long-term care insurance system, thereby enhancing the capacity of both the elderly and elderly care institutions to effectively cope with and withstand potential risks. The government has devised and refined long-term care subsidy policies and introduced a third party to oversee the efficacy of policy implementation. In order to implement the national strategy of actively responding to the ageing of the population and to establish an integrated elderly care service system that encompasses both home-based community institutions and a combination of medical and recreational care, the government has increased financial support for community-based elderly care services. This has been achieved by increasing the number of elderly care facilities and providing additional funding for the training of relevant professionals.

2. Strengthening the service supply capacity of community-based elderly care

The issue of elderly care has become a significant concern for all societal sectors, and thus, the enhancement of service provision for the elderly is a priority for many elderly individuals[5].

In order to provide a superior quality of life for the elderly, it is imperative that greater investment be made in the construction of superior community facilities for the elderly, such as nursing homes and activity and day-care centres for the elderly, in order to meet the growing needs of the elderly. Concurrently, the professional competencies of elderly care providers must be enhanced to ensure the delivery of optimal services. The provision of diversified and high-quality community elderly care services can be achieved through the introduction of talented individuals and the utilisation of the strengths of social organisations. The participation of social forces, enterprises and institutions in community elderly care services can be encouraged, while local residents can be motivated to actively engage in these services. Furthermore, volunteer activities can be organised and promoted. The promotion of mutual assistance among neighbours, and the enhancement of community cohesion and a sense of

social responsibility, will facilitate the establishment of a robust administrative supervisory mechanism for social assistance services. This will ensure the quality of services provided by relevant organisations. The aforementioned supervisory mechanism will guarantee the quality and safety of services. It is essential to conduct regular research into the demand for elderly services. Based on the findings of this research, elderly services should be planned and service resources should be allocated in a reasonable manner to meet the needs of the elderly at different stages of their lives. At the same time, preferential policies can be adopted to attract professionals to serve in community-based elderly care organisations, bring in foreign talent, and strengthen communication and exchanges between the relevant technical staff in order to improve overall standards.

3. The construction and management of government programmes for the elderly must be improved.

It is the responsibility of society to enhance the facilities and management mechanisms of nursing homes in order to meet the basic needs of the elderly. For example, renovation and refurbishment with government support, improvement of staff renewal mechanisms, and installation of additional safety and barrier-free facilities will undoubtedly enhance the quality of life of the elderly in nursing homes. Community-based elderly care institutions should provide a range of diversified services, the specifics of which should be tailored to the specific needs of the elderly. Such services should encompass medical care, healthcare, recreation and culture, in order to cater to the diverse requirements of the elderly population. Firstly, the facilities and equipment provided should be comprehensive, including beds, chairs, bathing equipment, walking aids and so forth, in order to guarantee the provision of a comfortable and secure living environment. Secondly, the number of professional nursing and service personnel should be increased in order to ensure the provision of quality care and services, which will help the elderly to maintain their physical and mental health. Thirdly, a robust management system must be established to reinforce the daily administration and oversight of elderly care facilities, thereby safeguarding the rights and interests of the elderly.

It is recommended that efforts be made to increase publicity regarding the services, quality, fees, and other relevant information provided by community-based elderly care institutions. This will facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the advantages and features of these institutions on the part of the elderly and their families. It would be beneficial to integrate with other resources in the community, including community health service centres, cultural activity centres, volunteer organisations, and so on, in order to make full use of community resources and provide more comprehensive elderly services. Furthermore, a communication mechanism with the elderly and their families should be established to provide regular feedback on their views and suggestions, thus enabling the continuous improvement of service quality and the fulfilment of their needs. Furthermore, the government may wish to consider encouraging the participation of social forces in the provision of social services to non-profit-making

organisations and charitable organisations. Furthermore, it may also collaborate with academic institutions or other sectors of the community to encourage the provision of voluntary services. Financial assistance and the input of trained personnel are provided with the objective of increasing the availability of services for the elderly.

4. Promoting standardisation and quality improvement of elderly services in towns and cities, as well as to enhance standards for community-based elderly services.

This encompasses the formulation of comprehensive regulations pertaining to the recruitment of personnel, as well as the clarification of the constituent elements of services, service processes, and service standards. Service plans should be formulated on a personalised basis, taking into account the specific needs and physical conditions of the elderly. It is essential to reinforce and oversee the personnel responsible for providing care in community-based elderly care institutions. It is recommended that regular training be provided to these professionals, with a view to enhancing their knowledge and skills. Seminars and other relevant activities may be conducted for this purpose. The establishment of a reliable service quality assessment mechanism, which will facilitate regular reviews and evaluations of the quality of services provided, is essential to ensure that the requisite standards are consistently met.

The utilisation of advanced technological tools is actively being introduced with the objective of enhancing the intelligence of community elderly services. The utilisation of the Internet and big data will facilitate the analysis and monitoring of the elderly's health records, thereby enabling the generation of valuable insights. The creation of intelligent systems for the elderly, coupled with the provision of convenient online booking, counselling and payment services, will result in an improvement in the convenience and efficiency of the services provided[6].

The objective is to enhance the visibility and dissemination of community-based services for the elderly. It is necessary to raise public awareness of and participation in non-profit-making community-based elderly services. This may be achieved by organising publicity activities and distributing promotional materials. It is recommended that active collaboration with relevant departments and enterprises be pursued with a view to promoting the development and innovation of community-based elderly services.

It is also necessary to enhance the processes of team building and management. The deployment of professional teams is a significant factor in enhancing the quality of social services for the elderly. It is essential to reinforce the sense of unity and collaboration within the team, as well as to foster team cohesion and creativity. This necessitates the cultivation of teamwork and a service spirit among service personnel, the reinforcement of internal team dynamics, and ultimately, the enhancement of overall efficiency. Furthermore, an effective incentive mechanism and a system of rewards and punishments must be established to stimulate the creativity of service personnel

and increase their motivation to work.

A systematic approach to professional ethics is essential. The code of professional ethics represents a moral code of conduct that should be observed by practitioners of community-based elderly care facilities. Service personnel must adhere to the highest standards of professional ethics, respect the rights and dignity of the elderly, and consider their needs and emotions. At the same time, it is necessary to establish and improve service standards, clarify service content and standards, and improve the regulatory mechanism to ensure that practitioners provide professional services in accordance with the highest standards.

V. Conclusion

Suggestions for Future Challenges and Development

As a significant component of the support structure for individuals to age in place, community-based aging necessitates comprehensive assistance for the enhancement of its service programmes. Community ageing encompasses not only the services provided in the home, but also serves to supplement the function of institutional care to a certain extent. Proximity and convenience are the core features of this model, and it is therefore vital to build service facilities and venues that are adapted to the diverse needs of the elderly. At present, older individuals residing in urban and rural areas are largely uninformed about the existence of community-based services designed to cater to their needs. This lack of awareness negatively impacts their willingness to utilise and purchase such services. It is therefore necessary to intensify efforts to publicise the services in question. In particular, community-based publicity should be conducted in urban areas, whereas in rural areas, measures such as policy advocacy and preferential support should be implemented to enhance the awareness and acceptance of community-based elderly care services among older persons. Concurrently, the establishment of community information facilities and equipment should be reinforced, including the creation of information networks for the elderly and comprehensive information service platforms. This will facilitate an accurate alignment between service demand and supply, thereby ensuring the elderly have access to more convenient, efficient and accurate elderly services.

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