

Improve Aging Issues with Integrated Community Services

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I. Background of developing integrated community services

Nowadays, the proportion of aged population in our country is increasing year by year and the degree of the phenomenon is becoming more serious as well. Compared with other countries, the elderly in China, except for a large population base, a rapid increase and the phenomenon of “getting old before getting rich”, has also suffered from problems like various chronic diseases, long course, and difficulties in treatment, which make them, occupy many medical facilities. We can say for sure that for a long time in the future, aging phenomenon may become a “normal” social form in Chinese society. Besides, we have also noticed that the aged population requires more extensive and diversified services.

While the current state in China is that: first, traditional ideas and realistic conditions determines that home-based care for the aged is still popular in our country; second, though the departments of social security, civil affairs and health all provide various services for the aged, the quality, efficiency and the sustainability are suffering the impact of the lack of effective connection and coordination among those departments. The above two reasons directly cause us scarce capacity in managing challenges from population aging. Therefore, the problems of aging society require the integration of strengths of the whole society. Internationally, countries such as the US and the UK apply integrated are model to cope with enormous challenges posed by aging population. The results of practice show that: integrated services not only improve work efficiency and satisfaction of the elderly towards service suppliers, but also improve management effectiveness and the aging people’s health. The integrated care model does not provide services under a default mode; instead, it aims at specific problems and introduces multivariate and innovative methods to provide all kinds of health and social services, so as to reduce repetition and resource waste and improve efficiency of resource utilization and service quality.

So far there are four ways of integration: first, to integrate departments in the aspects of key functions and activities; second, to establish work coordination groups among different organizations; third, to set up work groups between staffs of different majors from all departments, aiming at a specific problem; forth, medical integration, which means to integrate

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As the degree of population aging is deepening with each passing day, China faces many pressures in resources of medical care for the aged. How to relieve the pressures caused by the aged population to social medical establishments in health care has become one of the toughest problems in community governance. Therefore, this article tries to structure an “integrated community service” mode and specific policies in relation to such health care mode.

prevention and treatment and to provide patients with continuous diagnosis and treat treatment in clinical care process.

II. Strategies to Realize Healthy Aging

1. To undertake full path of health management

In the future, the best way to protect the aged people's health is to prevent diseases and protect health for the elderly during their life span. By "life span", we mean that we divide one's life into several specific phases and to implement health care measures aiming at groups of people of different ages in different places (family, communities, and work places), so as to ensure that people can receive targeted health care in different phases of their whole life spans.

1). We should promote healthy behaviors in all ages to prevent or postpone chronic diseases. None-infectious diseases in their old age are consequences of behaviors or exposure to risks in early life stages. Therefore, we should effectively implement measures to reduce exposure to such risky elements in their full life paths. Scientific researches and practices showed that with healthy diet, less drinking, and no smoking, the risk of getting chronic diseases in old age can be effectively reduced. As for the prevention of chronic diseases, the World Health Center has laid down a set of evidence-based "cost-smart" intervening measures, which not only has high benefit in coping with non-infectious diseases but also is feasible and suitable to perform in low- and middle-income countries in which health systems are under restrictions. It includes preventive strategies such as: to impose taxes on tobaccos and alcohols; to forbid smoking in work places and other public places; and to enhance people's sense of healthy in diet and activity.

2). To reduce impacts if chronic diseases through early detection and high-quality prevention and healthcare services. Early detection of chronic non-infectious diseases and effective control of those diseases and their risk factors is another important measure. For example, cardiovascular diseases that seriously threaten the health of the aged people should be prevented and managed in a better way. In practice, to bring prevention into daily clinical works and to carry out clinical prevention services are important measures for early detection and management of chronic diseases.

3). We should enhance and increase care and management that aims at chronic diseases. In reality, an old man with multiple conditions is usually on multiple medications. However, drug interaction frequently does harm to his health. As a consequence, we should build a consecutive system to manage and take care of chronic diseases, strengthen the construction

of gerontology, and meanwhile, we should also make sure that measures like out-of-hospital self-management and high-quality cares for chronic diseases are effectively implemented.

2. To construct comfortable circumstance for the elderly through integrating organizations and services.

Materials and social circumstance are of vital importance to people's health. To build elderly-friendly cities, communities and community health service centers to provide the elderly with comfortable and sustainable surroundings are crucial for realizing healthy aging.

Establishing elderly-friendly cities is an effective policy in coping with aging population in the whole world, because the elderly need to face physiological, psychological and social adaptation changes that are consequences of growing old. In an elderly-friendly community, policies, services and structures related to materials and social surroundings will support the elderly to deal with growing old more with energy. To build an elderly-friendly community means to establish an elderly-oriented community. And such community should have solid infrastructures and fine environment which accord with the senior citizens' requirement and habits, so that they can live here safely and cozily with full participant into the society and enjoy their old age energetically. To develop elderly-friendly communities has three purposes: first, to build fundamental environment that is suitable for the aged and can meet their basic needs; second, to ensure the elderly are respected and approved by the whole society so that they won't feel excluded, isolated and discriminated; third, to provide more opportunities and wider participant approaches for the elderly to get involved in community affairs and to get a job, to maximize the resources of the aged, and to help them to realize their self-worth and social worth so that they can feel the sense of satisfaction and achievement of returning to society.

III. Approaches of Integrated Community Services

To realize healthy aging and carry out integrated community services, first we should analyze whether the contents and forms of current community services contribute to health promotion, social participation of the aged population and meet their needs, thereby we can make some improvement; next we should analyze whether there are overlaps, repetitions and disparities between services provided by social service system and health care system, and on this basis, we summarize the merits and demerits, challenges and opportunities of current community services for the aged population; finally, we should apply participatory research methods-inviting all implementing subjects in the community to discuss the following aspects: 1) division and cooperation mechanism,

information management and service funding mechanisms which are aimed at realizing integrating functions; 2) coordination groups which are aimed at realizing integrating organizations; 3) how to interweave all parts together to achieve integration of services; 4) functions and services of community health service centers, which are aimed at providing continuous prevention, diagnosis and treatment services from inside to outside clinics. And we should encourage the community health service centers to apply new management mode, like self-management and group medical visits, to provide services for the aged patients.

Translator/Dong Xin