The Enlightenment of the Home-based Elderly Care Mode in Foreign Countries

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Abstract. This essay aims to analyze the current situation of elderly care mode in China and tries to explore the most suitable mode borrowing from the successful diverse systems in foreign countries. The author takes the home-based care mode in Great Britain, United States and Japan as models and then points out the enlightenment and prospect of Home-based Elderly Care Mode in China.

Introduction

As a powerful and well-known nation in the East, China has been deeply influenced by filial piety and family members should take good care of the aged parents. The traditional Chinese elderly care service is mainly based on family, for the family members shoulder the responsibility of providing material needs and daily care. Such a mode has been a practice passed down from one generation to another. With the economic development and drastic transition of society, the family structure tends to be minimized, with the aged parents being taken care of. So who are supposed to shoulder the responsibilities of taking good care of those aged parents? During the daytime, younger generation has to be busy with their work, and the elder generation is reluctant to be looked after in the far-away nursing institutions where people have no sense of belonging at all. Taking all the factors above into consideration, the home-based elderly care mode is highly recommended. As for this aspect, foreign countries have accumulated lots of experiences and made great achievements, so they are sure to bring lots of enlightenments to the home-based elderly care mode in China.

The Elderly Care Mode in Foreign Countries

Home-based elderly care mode refers to the one in which the aged live at home, enjoying certain facilities provided by communities and different kinds of services offered by both families and society. Such a mode was first put forward by the British government, with the original purpose of encouraging families to take care of the aged who are expected to stay at home or in communities. In Great Britain, this mode underwent a long period of development from agency-based elderly care mode to the home-based one.

Quite different from the situation in China, the welfare systems in foreign countries are much more advanced, which has laid a solid foundation for the elderly care mode afterwards. Early in 1950s, the welfare systems in foreign countries were established one after another. In 1970s, the economic crisis put the western countries with abundant welfare into mire and the concept of aids within families, social help and national guarantee gradually took shape. In other words, social welfare service not only relies on national welfare but also needs different forces in society as well as bringing the function of families into full play. Till the 19th century, western countries established a great many agencies to provide different services to orphans, the aged and patients suffering from mental disorder. Gradually, the elderly care service in western countries has turned into a mode in which families, communities and agencies play respective roles in providing service to the aged.
Home-based Elderly Care Mode in Great Britain

The home-based elderly care mode in Great Britain is mostly funded in the form of national welfare. A large portion of the capital derives from the government, while the rest funds are raised by private corporations, associations and charities. The elderly care is undertaken within communities, including the manager, professional workers and daycare workers, each playing a particular role. For the manager, he is in charge of the general work, such as the distribution of funds, the employment of daycare workers and professional workers. For professional workers, they must get some certificates by passing exams to ensure their qualifications. They should be responsible for the elders’ needs within communities, helping them out of trouble. For the daycare workers, they should provide direct care service for the aged, including those volunteers.

Basically, there are four aspects of service concerning the home-based elderly care mode in Great Britain, such as daily care, material aid, psychological support, and government’s care. Daily care is mainly provided by the communities, including daycare, cooking, doing laundry, cleaning and so on. Material aid covers the subsidies and the upgrading of the equipment in the living environment for the aged. Psychological support refers to the free services offered by doctors from door to door, including the emotional and spiritual consolation, counseling service, nursing service and the preaching of healthcare to the aged. Government’s care refers to the activity centers funded by the government, which can offer different kinds of entertainments for the aged. Besides, such activity centers can offer less intense jobs, more pleasure for the age, helping them to increase their income and maintaining healthy mentality.

Home-based Elderly Care Mode in the U.S

American home-based elderly care mode is on the basis of the Medicare system, taking advantage of the medical insurance to support the home-based elderly care system. Generally speaking, the American medical insurance mainly includes the following two aspects: Medicare and Medicaid. The former one covers those elderly groups who are aged over 65 or those vulnerable groups aged less than 65 who are handicapped or disabled; while the latter one is sponsored by the federal government and supervised by the state government, covering the handicapped elderly groups aged over 65, the families with children and the aged with their income under the poverty line. The state government should be responsible for establishing the standard of the Medicaid and its coverage in accordance with the income level in each state; while the federal government is only in charge of providing part of the funds. The Medicare and Medicaid provide monthly subsidies for those special elderly groups. Besides, there are some other channels to provide funds for these privileged groups such as personal account, charitable donations and social relief. As a country with better social welfare system, the communities in the United States also provide some free service for those middle-income and low-income aged groups. The facilities in American communities are also available for the aged groups such as activity centers and fitness centers. The elderly groups can also enjoy relevant home-based elderly care services such as daycare service and household service offered by communities.

Home-based Elderly Care Mode in Japan

In Japan, the home-based elderly care mode takes the family-centered form, focusing on family’s important role in the elderly care system. Quite different from western countries which pay less attention to the family’s responsibilities for the elderly care, the Japanese society takes full advantage of families’ key role, based on which related laws and policies are established. The specific services in Japan include daycare service, household service, short-term entrusting service, and follow-up service.
The Enlightenment and Prospect of Home-based Elderly Care Mode in China

From the perspective of economics, the home-based elderly care mode is an effective means to take good advantage of limited resources and the most economical public consumption. In China, the traditional elderly care service can’t meet the challenge of the aged society. Under such circumstances, Multi-layered home-based elderly care mode should be highly recommended. Currently, the home-based elderly care mode is mainly funded by the government, which provides welfare service. Compared with western developed countries, China has a large population and the government undertakes heavy financial burden. The solely dependence on the government’s financial investment can’t meet the diverse needs for the elderly care. So the government is supposed to play a dominant role to supervise the service, perfect related regulations, take advantage of social resources, and encourage different social forces to participate in constructing the home-based elderly care service, and gradually establish a multi-layered home-based elderly care system co-participated by government, society and families.

The diverse items of home-based elderly care service in foreign countries, such as the long-term professional care and communities’ home-based service in the U.S., the agencies’ daycare service and follow-up elderly care services in Japan, and communities’ care service in Great Britain, offer some enlightenment for Chinese government. Borrowing some rich experience from developed countries, Chinese government should consider providing basic services, covering clothing, food, shelter, transportation, and Medicare and pension system. Based on these, diverse elderly care services should be considered to be adopted, covering spiritual consolation, cultural entertainments, physical exercise, health care, fitness centers, law service, and ultimate care and so on. All these services are aimed to create a better environment and provide an overall support for the aged in terms of physical aspect, physiological aspect, entertaining aspect, spiritual aspect and cultural aspect to meet the ever-growing multi-layered needs for the elderly care.

Strengthen the staff construction. The staffs of the home-based elderly care system in foreign countries are composed of professional doctors, nursing staff, housekeeping personnel, and volunteers. Taking China’s current situation into consideration, a number of problems still exist. For instance, there is a shortage of professional staff who tend to be no longer young. Recently, it is an urgent task to strengthen the staff construction. On the one hand, regular trainings are suggested to be carried out in order to raise the professional level of service. On the other hand, the high-qualified professional talents should be introduced to improve the overall quality of the staff. Besides, the volunteers’ regulations should be constructed, perfected and standardized. The volunteers’ service should be enhanced to be guided and supervised so as to bring different social forces into full play and further improve the efficiency of elderly care service.

Conclusion

While learning the advanced experience from western countries, it is necessary to consider the real situation in China so as to establish the home-based elderly care service with Chinese characteristics. However, such a mode is still in the preliminary stage and there is still a series of aspects which need to be perfected. For instance, communities and agencies can’t offer ready aids to specific families; communities place more reliance on the resources provided by the government; negative impacts have been brought about by rapid social changes on the home-based elderly care service; the actual situation is incompatible with the development of aged society and the living standard of those aged groups should be greatly improved. With more experiences learned and lessons drawn from foreign countries, the current home-based elderly care modes in China are sure to be perfected one day.

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References


