Results on “Effectiveness of Daycare Services for the Dementia Population in Hong Kong”

Daycare services in Hong Kong have been developed to provide recreational activities, training and respite care for the aged population for over 20 years. Specialized daycare services for the demented population were first developed in 2000 and evidence concerning their effectiveness is lacking. The current report describes a longitudinal study that demonstrates the effectiveness of a local daycare service on the psychosocial functioning in a group of demented elderly.

Study Design
To empirically evaluate the effectiveness of the specialized daycare training program, a prospective study was launched in Jockey Club Centre for Positive Ageing (JCCPA) from Jan 2006 to June 2008. During the period a total number of 119 elderly had received daycare services in JCCPA and among them 56 users had consent and completed a six month follow-up study. They were elderly with formal diagnosis of dementia and attended JCCPA’s daycare services for more than 2 days per week. In order to compare and contrast the change of performance, 41 community-residing demented elderly were recruited from geriatric outpatient clinic as the control group. Both groups received medications on dementia-related symptoms. We examined the changes in general cognitive functioning, activities of daily living and self-perceived quality of life in these two groups of elderly across six months time. In addition, family members of 23 users of JCCPA and 23 elderly in the control group were assessed on their perceived burden in providing care.

Findings and Recommendations
Comparing the change of functioning across the six-month period, the most significant finding was maintenance of perceived quality of life in JCCPA users while there is a significant drop in the control group. Both groups showed similar level of retention in cognitive and daily functioning. On the measure of family member’s burden in caregiving, family members of JCCPA users showed a decreasing trend of burden while family members of the control group remained the same.

These findings suggested that demented elderly may benefit from the daycare training program and maintain their quality of life. The above findings are the first piece of empirical evidence available locally showing the effectiveness of our daycare training program. Depending on available resources, the whole set or separate components of the program could be promoted to other daycare service providers for an evidence-based practice in the care of the demented population.

An estimation based on local survey data in 2006 suggested that there exist over 60000 demented elderly in the Hong Kong population. Currently in Hong Kong there are less than five specialized daycare centers that provide training and respite for the demented population. By a very rough estimation, less than 5% of the demented population receives services in the community. There is an urge to increase the service coverage of dementia care in the community to alleviate the burden of caretakers. Our daycare program could be used as a referencing model for other daycare agencies to develop their program.
**JCCPA and Its Training Program**

Jockey Club Centre for Positive Ageing was established in 2000 and is the first specialized daycare centre in Hong Kong. Throughout the eight years of service evolution, JCCPA had developed and refined a training program specifically for the demented elderly.

The training program integrates a number of psychosocial interventions and the case management approach. Core components include small group training on memory, activities of daily living, reality orientation, and cognitive stimulation. Alternative treatment modalities are also used, for example, animal-assisted therapy, aromatherapy, and music therapy. The combination of different groups is expected to improve the quality of life as well as maintaining the basic cognitive and daily functions of the demented elderly.