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## Survey Reveals High Rate of Day Care Users Have Dementia in Hong Kong

At present, there are 59 Day Care Centres / Units for the Elderly in the territory providing centre-based day care services to more than 3,200 frail elders who have long term care needs or cannot be taken care of by their family members during daytime. The services cover personal and nursing care, rehabilitation exercise, meal and escort etc.

In an attempt to investigate the day care usage by dementia clients, and the associated caregiving difficulty, Jockey Club Centre for Positive Ageing (JCCPA) and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) have jointly conducted a survey between March and July 2010 to 59 government-subsidized day care centres in Hong Kong. By means of questionnaire, the centre-in-charges were asked about the composition of day care users, and the perceived difficulty of caregiving for mobile dementia and immobile dementia clients. Fifty-five completed questionnaires were returned by mail, yielding the response rate of 93 %.

Director of JCCPA Professor Timothy Kwok, who is also the Professor of the Department of Medicine & Therapeutics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, says the findings reveal that 1,420 day care service users (44%) were suffering from dementia. Among the active cases with dementia, 1,044 of them (74%) had good mobility (those who were assisted walkers or could walk freely without aids). In addition, of the 1,523 new cases during 2009-2010, 728 (48%) were afflicted by dementia.

With regards to caregiving difficulty, 98% respondents reported that the dementia clients with good mobility were very difficult (38%) or quite difficult (60%) to take care. Aggressive behaviour or language was chosen as the most difficult behavioural problem to deal with, followed by wandering and agitation (see Tables 1 and 2).

When caring for immobile dementia clients, only 11% respondents found it very difficult, and 45% found it quite difficult to care. Another 11% thought that the caregiving were "quite easy". This reflected that the staff generally found it more challenging to care for mobile dementia clients. As for items of difficulty, the most difficult behavioural problem to tackle was aggressive behaviour or language, followed by agitation, eating problem, and fall risk.

Ms Christine Fang, the Chief Executive of HKCSS, points out that dementia is a global concern and thus is World Alzheimer's Day made on every September 21. It aims to raise awareness about Alzheimer's disease and dementia in general. However, as the population is ageing rapidly in Hong Kong, our support to people with dementia and the carers is severely inadequate although the Government commented to support those elderly people who live at home in the last Policy Address.

Aside from the 1,100 elders who are still waiting in line for day care service, manpower and environmental design fall short of real demand. 55% respondents said manpower shortage was most relevant to limit the delivery of quality care to mobile dementia clients.

Environmental design and lack of space also affected the staff to care for the elderly.

Day care not only provides flexible services for people with dementia to manage behavioural problems and reduce caregiving burden, but also maintains level of functioning, and allows them to reside within the community. JCCPA and HKCSS urge the Government to allocate more resources to improve the existing day care service. We therefore recommend:

#### **Demand of Service**

- To increase at least 20 Day Care Centres in the coming 5 years to shorten the time of service waiting.
- To launch public awareness campaigns and timely training. Set up Regional Day Training and Therapeutic Centre for older people with cognitive impairment.
- To make dementia a public health priority. Regular monitoring, reporting and developing strategies to improve health outcomes for elders with dementia.
- Other than the subvented option, self-financed operation may be worth exploring. Kick start the service planning mechanism.

#### **Insufficient Space**

- To propose the Government to review and improve the existing terms and conditions of providing dementia services. For instance in scheduling of the NOFA of a day care centre, activity area, accommodation, service infrastructure, and manpower planning should be incorporated.
- Occupant on average is allowed only 2.6m<sup>2</sup>. We recommend increasing the net activity area up to 10m<sup>2</sup> for each person
- To improve the environmental setting and addition of therapeutic devices should be invested to add convenience of caregiving.

#### **Manpower Shortage**

- Provide Dementia Care Supplement or To increase 1 Physiotherapist/Occupational Therapist, a social worker and 2 frontline program staff.
- To put forward training about the proper management skills.
- To encourage more collaboration between medical and social care professions

\* Insufficient space in day care centres has become a problem that the service can no longer cope with the increasing frailty of the users. Based on the official guideline of scheduling the Net Operational Floor Area (NOFA), the NOFA of a standard Day Care Centre for the Elderly (Capacity: 40) is 218m<sup>2</sup>. Excluding the non-activity area, a standard centre is only left with about 132 m<sup>2</sup>. Given each standard centre is now serving around 50 elders with moderate level of impairment, each occupant on average is allowed only 2.6m<sup>2</sup>.

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#### **Media enquiries:**

Ms Eunice Hui  
Training and Promotion Manager, Jockey Club Centre for Positive Ageing (Tel: 2636-6323)

Mr Eddie Tsang  
Communications Officer, Hong Kong Council of Social Service (Tel: 2864-2982)

## Attachment

**Table 1: Caregiving difficulty for mobile dementia and immobile dementia clients, comparing with physically disabled clients**

		Mobile N (%)	Immobile N (%)
Caregiving difficulty	Very difficult	21 (38)	6 (11)
	Quite difficult	33 (60)	25 (45)
	Fair	1 (2)	18 (33)
	Quite easy	0	6 (11)
	Very easy	0	0

**Table 2: Most difficult behavioural problem to handle for mobile dementia and immobile dementia clients**

		Mobile N (%)	Immobile N (%)
Most difficult behavioural problem	Aggressive behaviour or language	29 (53)	16 (29)
	Wandering	13 (24)	2 (4)
	Agitation	3 (5.5)	6 (11)
	Demanding family caregivers	3 (5.5)	5 (9)
	Refusal of care	3 (5.5)	6 (11)
	Care in basic ADL	0	8 (14)
	Fall risk	3 (5.5)	4 (7)
	Eating problem	0	6 (11)
	Refusal to come or late arrival	1 (1)	1 (2)
	Medical problem	0	1 (2)
	Depression	0	0
	Paranoid delusion	0	0