

Community care for frail older people

EDITORIAL

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Dementia is an increasingly prevalent condition among older people in Asia. The medical and psychosocial care of demented people is the subject of the coming World Congress on Ageing and Dementia in Chinese Communities, jointly organised by the Hong Kong Alzheimer's Disease Association, the Hong Kong Hospital Authority, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese Pharmacology Association. Speakers will include world renowned and local experts in the field of dementing diseases and the psychosocial care of dementia. For future reference, our Journal has taken the opportunity to publish the abstracts of presentations in this notable conference.

Apart from dementia, depression is a major cause of disability and suffering in old age. Chan et al¹ reported a high prevalence of depression among frail older people under the enhanced home care programme in Hong Kong. Not surprisingly depression was associated with recurrent hospital admissions. More importantly medical treatment of depression was found to be effective.

In another interesting article from Canada,² the family dynamics of three generational households of Chinese immigrated to Canada was examined using an ethnographic approach. The strength of the extended families in coping with the challenges in a foreign country and the special needs of such families when the older members become frail were explored in detail.

Most older people are healthy and can contribute greatly to their families and society, but a significant minority can be expected to require long-term care because of physical and/or mental disabilities. Rather than labelling them as a burden, the frailer elders should be seen as worthy members of a civilised society. In order to maintain their quality of life, Asian countries should develop integrated systems of social and medical care services to support family caregivers of older people.

References

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