

Service provisions for the elderly



ANSWER:

Have you ever wondered why people say it is rude to ask a girl for her age? Do you know why most adults cringe every time they celebrate their birthdays? Truth be told, most of us fear aging because we associate it the gradual loss of our physical and mental abilities which in turn affects our emotional state. Bernard Nash asks, “ Does it not strike you that we all want to live longer but none of us wants to grow old?”[1]Tangelder, J. (2014). He believes that aging, to most of us, is like a paradox. We enjoy life enough for us to choose to live longer yet we fear the effects of aging because it links towards the inevitable end.

Most of us view aging as a loss of the benefits of our youth and the gain of multiple drawbacks of aging like diseases and illnesses such as dementia and hypertension. Physically speaking, it is a known fact that we lose a lot of control when we age. We lose the ability to walk properly, pee at will, see clearly, hear accurately, and so on. Also, aging introduces things that we do not have control of like arthritis, diabetes, sleep disorder, and many more. Aging even affects most of us emotionally. People get depressed from losing all the control that they once has. All these negative ideas leaves most of us with the fear of growing old.

However, people need to understand that there are multiple ways to “ age gracefully” and cope with these changes through the advent of medical advancements and growing concerns of aging. We can now cope to the point where we can enjoy the transition from being young to becoming elderly. All people need is a little support as we go through all these changes of being

an elderly. One of the most important kind of support that people need is emotional support. We can get these support from our own families and friends. Some people also find comfort by going to their church community or marae based community.

Also, here in New Zealand, there are a lot of support groups that can help people who get depressed from not being able to do what we were so accustomed to do. In Auckland alone, there are multiple organisations such as GROW, Balance NZ, Emotions Anonymous, Franklin Depression Support Group, Raeburn House, Men's Change & Support Group, and many more. All of which aims to help those undergoing change and depression. There even is a Depression Helpline. All these networks for us to use so that we can learn a thing or two about battling our demons of aging.

Furthermore, there are multiple support organisations that help with common geriatric issues. One for which is Health and Disability Advocacy Service. Advocates help those who think their rights are being violated. In this case, one's rights to health and disability service. Advocates side with the service-user. They generally listen to one's concerns, explain your rights, suggest different courses of action, and support the actions that one takes. In New Zealand, this is a free service. This service is very important because it is always nice to have someone behind your back. If things go south, at least you know there is a group willing to listen and help with your health and disability problems.

As we all know, Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. " Alzheimer's disease is an irreversible, progressive brain disease that slowly

destroys memory and thinking skills, and eventually even the ability to carry out the simplest tasks.”[2](“ Alzheimer’s Disease”, 2011, p. 1). Because of this, I believe that Alzheimer’s New Zealand is another support organization that assists the elderly to cope with this particular disease. They are a non-profit organisation that support people with this disease by giving information and education programmes to aid in better understanding of the disease. They also assist people by giving them useful information on how to provide financial support in availing of further assistance from other supportive organisations.

HealthEd is another support organisation that helps with the aging process. Basically, HealthEd provides a list of free health catalogue resources conveyed by the Ministry of Health and Health Promotion Agency. Though they do not provide free services, what they offer is free information. People in New Zealand will be able to access unlimited information about certain health diseases or issues such as arthritis, Alzheimer’s, stroke, and many more. For me, information is very vital because it helps people understand what they have, what they are going through, and how they can cope. There may be information on how to contain the disease, maintain good health, or eliminate the disease all together.

Age Concern is also an important organisation here in New Zealand. Their primary focus is to promote the dignity, respect, rights, and wellbeing of older people. Similar to HealthEd, they have many useful articles in their own website about aging. They help the elderly in New Zealand by providing information and support. They want to have a society in which the elderly are included rather than excluded. They want to establish a place where the

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elderly plays a valued role in the community. Age Concern also helps with social isolation, loneliness, and elder abuse.

Finally, the SuperGold Card is one way of showing how much New Zealand appreciates and values the contributions of the elderly. Basically, by having this card, the elderly can enjoy discounts and offers from different establishments. There is no actual retirement age in New Zealand but once elderly can no longer work, they generally have limited funds. Having these discounts will help them enjoy the finer things in life. After all, they do deserve it.

Besides the different support organisations, New Zealand also has different service provisions that the elderly can choose to avail. One example is the hospital. Here in New Zealand, there are many private hospital establishments that specialize in elderly care. People who choose to avail this service are those who require hospital level of care. Whoever avails of this service can be assured that qualified clinical staff will be with them for the duration of their stay. Doctors, nurses, therapists, pharmacists, and other medical staff will be present in these establishments.

Hospices are another service provision present in New Zealand. Hospice New Zealand (2014) explains that hospice care has a unique whole person approach – which means physical, spiritual, emotional and social needs are equally important – a multidisciplinary team provides care for the person who is dying and their families and friends, both before and after a death.

[3]Hospices tailor-fits an elder’s treatment plan based on what he or she thinks is important. If an elderly service user believes that being a part of the

community is essential to growing old, then the hospice sees to it that the service user remains part of the community. Based on my current experience, this is done by taking them out of the house and having them do things they like such as bowling or doing the groceries.

Residential Care is also a service provision in which the elderly can avail. This is a long-term care given in a rest home which includes rest home care, continuing hospital care, and dementia care. Residents of New Zealand get a Residential Care subsidy through government funding. This is very important because this helps geriatric people financially. Even if the government does not pay all the cost of this service, it is a very big help compared to other countries where they need to spend money from their own pockets.

Nursing Homes is similar to Residential Care. The biggest difference is the level of care offered by these homes. Residential Care is more on the activities of daily living while Nursing Homes involves the medical aspect such as giving of medication and providing basic first aid when needed. According to Jenni Wiltz (2013), nursing care facilities provide room, board and care for patients who aren't able to live on their own or in an assisted living facility due to serious debilitation or a medical condition.[4]

Another service provision that is out there is Independent Living services. Adolf Ratzka (2003) defines Independent Living as a philosophy and a movement of people with disabilities who work for self-determination, equal opportunities and self-respect.[5] Independent Living does not mean that the service user does not need any help at all. Independent Living is being able to have the same rights and choices that other non-disabled people have.

Even if we grow old, that does not mean we lose the control we have in making choices for ourselves.

I also consider Day Care a crucial service provision that can assist the elderly. Before we get old, we enjoy doing different things like swimming, horseback riding, or going to the beach. When we get old, it does not mean we stop liking these things. Day Care is a programme where the elderly can continue to enjoy the things they used to do. In the place I work, we see to it that our service users do things they enjoy. We take them swimming, bowling, laughter yoga, and many more.

All these support organisations and service provisions are there for a reason. As an employee of Kindly Residential Care and Rest Home, I believe that the above mentioned organisations and services should be accessed so that our service users can enjoy the finer things in life. By introducing them and their families to these options, our service users will have the dignity to age gracefully. They might even consider this stage in their lives to be the best among the rest and, possibly, look forward to what awaits them in the not so distant future.

ANSWER:

SOCIAL ISOLATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THEIR FAMILY

- When people grow old, it is a known fact that they gradually lose the different abilities and skills they once had. This muddles one's emotions to a point of them losing their own self-confidence thereby choosing to isolate themselves from their families, friends and others.

But social isolation isn't only a result of one's own doing, society tends to isolate the elderly thinking they are too fragile to do anything. Kindly Residential Care Rest Home understands the importance of being part of a bigger whole. We have partnered with different organizations to ensure that our service users remain part of society. We also have a series of activities and programs that our service user can choose to be a part of such as:

- Day care
- Swimming
- 10 pin bowling
- Fishing
- Horseback riding
- Group recreational activities like coloring, drawing, and painting.
- Music therapy
- Laughter yoga
- Others

ASSUMPTION OF AUTOMATIC LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE

- Society has this concept that the older people get, the more they would need our assistance. Though this is somewhat true, it does not mean these people automatically lose all sense of independence. They may not be able to do the things they used to do but they still have right to independence and choice. In Kindly Residential Care Rest Home, we make sure that our service users are given the dignity to remain as independent as possible through various ways such as:

- Giving them a chance to choose. They can choose what to wear, what to eat, or what chores they want to do.
- Encourage and empowering them to do things. Assigning of tasks will make them feel like they are part of a bigger picture.
- Supporting them as needed. We do not do things for them but we assists them whenever there is a need.
- Being patient and letting them do things at their own pace. As long as the job is done, it does not really matter how long it takes.
- Educating the service users, their families, and society. Everyone should know what the service user is going through so that everyone will be on the same page when it comes to caring for the service user.

UNABLE TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT OWN CARE

- People often have this misconception about the elderly not being able to make sound decisions about many things especially their own care. Most elderly people retain the ability to make decisions but there are a few that require aid and support. We, at Kindly Residential Care Rest Home, believe in supporting our service users in whatever decisions they make as long as no harm will come to them. By partnering with other organizations, we can assure our service users that they can make the best educated decision regarding their health. Our partners are:
 - Health and Disability Advocacy Service
 - Age Concern
 - Grey Power
 - Carers New Zealand

- HealthEd
- Alzheimer's New Zealand
- SeniorLine
- Others

DISSATISFYING INTERACTIONS WITH THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY

- People often write off the elderly because they assume that the elderly have no clue as to what they are doing or as to what is currently going on around them. We live in a fast-paced world and people think that the elderly take too long to catch up. People think the elderly cannot learn new things. Especially in the medical community, medical staff tends to do things for the service user to speed up the process. Instead of giving the elderly a chance to accomplish something, most staff ignores this. This results in both parties having the wrong conception towards each other. Most medical communities feel like the elderly are always unsatisfied with their help while the elderly feel like they are being taken for granted.
- Kindly Residential Care Rest Home sees to it that every service user is given full attention especially when it comes to their medical status. This can be achieved through:
 - Prioritizing the service user
 - Practicing active listening
 - Personalizing the type of care towards the needs of the service user
 - Quarterly review to check what is working, what needs to be done, and what to improve on.
 - Proper training of staff if needed

UNCERTAINTY OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND TREATMENTS

- People usually fear the unknown. The elderly never had the same access to internet as we do. Knowing and getting specific information about the different support services and treatments out there was very hard to come by. And once they do come by a specific support service or treatment they have not heard of, they will be very skeptical and hesitant to try it. Unlike today's generation, we can easily read people's comments and testimonials about a certain support service or treatment. Through those, we can make a sound decision whether to go through with the program or not.
- Kindly Residential Care Rest Home fully understands this dilemma most service users have and we have dedicated ourselves to helping our service user find the right support service or treatment that best suits them. Because of our vast knowledge and partnership with support organizations, we make sure each service user knows about their options by:
 - Explaining about the program
 - Telling them about the advantages and disadvantages of the support service or treatment
 - Giving recommendations
 - Enrolling them for a trial period if possible
 - Making follow-ups to see if the service user is satisfied with the service

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