

## THE INFLUENCE OF HOME CARE SERVICES ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE ELDERLY

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**ABSTRACT:** *The rapid aging of the global population, dominated by earlier onset of disease and longer life expectancy with conditions, generates major challenges in the field of geriatric healthcare. Community home aged care services are a viable alternative for providing care for the elderly and protecting their health. The desire of the elderly to "age in place" can be satisfied by using a community-based model of home-aged care, which succeeds in reducing the stress of family care of the elderly, lowers the cost of long-term care and diminishes the financial burden of the government. Home care services reflect this emerging preference, allowing the elderly to remain with family members rather than accessing care services in an institutionalized system [1].*

**Keywords:** *elderly; quality of life; healthy aging; home-based care service; caregiver;*

### Introduction

Aging is a biological process influenced by genetic and environmental factors. Old age is a period of transition, where every human being faces not only physical aging but also vulnerabilities that affect mental, emotional and social well-being. However, the needs and problems of the elderly vary significantly according to age, socio-economic status and health status.

As the population ages, their quality of life is determined by their ability to maintain their autonomy and independence. Quality of life is a broader concept that includes several factors related to an individual's physical health, mental state, level of independence, social relationships, spiritual beliefs, and the environment. Quality of life assessment plays an important role and maintains a balance between an individual's functional health, feelings of competence, independence in activities of daily living, and satisfaction with social circumstances.

Faced with an aging population, governments are trying to find a balance between managing health care expenditures for the care of the elderly and how best to allocate resources for their well-being [2]. The World Health Organization highlights the role of providing home care services to enable older people to age in their homes with dignity [3].

Next we will try to define home care. We cannot say that there is a universal definition, but

home care is a specialized, broad-spectrum service that includes both health care and social assistance services at people's homes, in order to preserve their quality of life.

Home care services contribute to decreasing mortality, reducing hospitalizations and increasing quality of life [4]. Recipients of these services are often 85 years of age or older, and their caregivers are at least 65 years of age. This shows us that carers of the elderly may become potential candidates for care services, as they may experience poorer health compared to younger carers. On the other hand, people who have reached the age of 65 are the main users of home care services.

Home care services can provide 24-hour support to vulnerable seniors or adults with disabilities for household activities. This home care alternative involves much lower costs compared to institutional care and can be provided by both formal (specialist) and informal (family members, neighbors or friends) caregivers. Formal home care includes both home care services and home assistance services [5].

The social problems faced by older people require support for physical, financial, mental and social well-being. In this context, the role of families together with social assistance services at home contributes significantly to increasing the quality of life of seniors. The need for care among the elderly is constantly increasing and often faces challenges such as low resources and social marginalization. From this perspective, a holistic

approach is required in the care of the elderly, both in the family and in residential social services. [6].

The issue of quality in the provision of medical services, with an emphasis on home care for the elderly, has become a major public health priority in the context of promoting healthy aging, emphasizing the development and implementation of quality indicators for the provision of fair, integrated and adapted services the needs of the elderly.

**1. The influence of the home care service on the level of life satisfaction.** Home care service usually refers to the provision of medico-social care services for the elderly at their home based on the health insurance system, such as nursing services, meal services and personal care services. The policy of providing these types of services has developed a mechanism of care for the elderly, which includes family, community and society, as a form of support to actively cope with aging.

The offer of home care services in Romania is low. From the perspective of different types of services, investments in the development of home care services can significantly improve the quality of life of seniors [7].

Home care service has become the dominant way of providing socio-medical care services as a response of governments to implement the strategy of active response to the aging of the population.

Home care has been found to delay older adults' transition to institutional long-term care services [8], [9].

The World Health Organization defines quality of life as "an individual's perception of life in the context of the culture and value system in which he lives and in relation to his goals, expectations, standards and concerns" [3].

For an overall picture of the quality of life, an interconnection between several closely related fields is needed, which complement each other. Several studies [10], [11], [12] show that health assessed as good, positive attitude towards life, effective social relations, autonomy, active social roles contribute to a high level of quality of life.

From this perspective, it is important for care providers to be aware that the domains assigned to quality of life are closely related, so that changes in one domain affect other domains of quality of life. For example, among the elderly, health

occupies a priority place, above all, being the primary element to have an increased level of quality of life. A good state of health allows seniors to carry out meaningful activities, by participating in daily activities, socializing activities, involvement in community activities.

As the elderly person's autonomy is affected [13] without being able to manage on their own, they feel a sense of uselessness, becoming a burden to those around them. In contrast, the elderly's desire to maintain their independence for longer helps them to have a sense of control over their own lives.

Due to addiction, elderly people experience feelings of guilt and shame, and their self-image is affected. Often seeing themselves as powerless, seniors focus on their remaining abilities, trying to preserve their dignity when care is needed. Several researches in the field of elderly care [14], [15], [16] have highlighted that family members have a valuable contribution to help the elderly maintain their dignity.

The social contact and belonging of elderly people receiving home care services are influenced by several characteristics. The sense of belonging requires the person's awareness of his right to be included in a social group, and for some people integration may depend on the respect they receive from society, as a sense of mutual recognition. Lack of social contact may present risks among older people depending on external and internal resources to integrate into the family or social group.

However, the health problems experienced by seniors can be a barrier to social activity and lead to feelings of loneliness. Loneliness implies the absence of social relations, a disconnection from interaction with other people.

For most elderly people, caring in their homes provided them with comfort and at the same time they were connected to their past, present and future, feeling a strong sense of belonging.

Quality of life is an important indicator for measuring a good life and can comprehensively evaluate its content, the living conditions of the population from the perspective of social development results, and allocate public resources scientifically and efficiently [17].

At the same time, scientific research [18], [19] about the impact of home care services on the elderly has gradually increased in recent years. Daily reality shows us that the use of home care services has a considerable contribution to the

quality of life, life satisfaction, but also to the health status of the elderly. Simultaneously, it is essential that the elderly maintain active social contacts, both with family members and with friends or neighbors, helping to avoid loneliness. Especially life partners and grandchildren are a source of support and affection.

Researchers argue that the impact of home care service on older people depends on the quality of the home care service. When the quality of home care services provided meets the needs of the elderly, the physical pain, loneliness and isolation of the elderly will decrease significantly. When the service quality does not meet the needs of the elderly, it will cause depression, a number of negative problems such as physical dysfunction and the perception of life stress.

**2. The role of the family in the care of the elderly.** As they age, people prefer to stay in their own homes, maintain their autonomy and seek the support of family members and friends when they need help. Staying at home as you age is called "aging at home." Living at home in old age requires careful consideration and planning.

Family caregiving is the act of providing care at home to a relative, friend, or other loved one with a physical or mental health problem [20]. As life expectancy increases, medical treatments advance, and more people live with chronic illnesses and disabilities, many of us find ourselves caring for a loved one in the family environment.

Home care also addresses mental health, making a significant contribution to combating loneliness through companionship and emotional support, which is essential for the general well-being of older people. In addition, caregivers help manage chronic conditions and facilitate healthier lifestyles, contributing to improved health outcomes and life satisfaction among seniors [21]. Family members have an important contribution in providing care services for the elderly. The health of family members is conditioned by family relationships. Several studies have shown that family relationships based on mutual support can be a dominant factor in ensuring the quality of life of older people [22], [23], [24].

The contact of the elderly with family and friends is important, being a source of permanent support, by engaging in daily activities, sharing thoughts and experiences, feeling valued,

stimulating the commitment and interest of the elderly.

A challenge in the activity of caring for the elderly is the family's ability to meet their physical, economic, psychological and social needs. To develop certain care strategies based on family involvement, which best suits the sociocultural environment of our society, implies the duty of the younger generation to provide support to the older generation [25].

Promoting a sense of social belonging is vital for older people living at home. The social role of the elderly is important for the well-being they bring to families, but also to communities. Although they face a decline, the elderly offer valuable experiences and knowledge, being a true source of wisdom. Through the social inclusion of older people, age-specific vulnerabilities will be overcome, and they can feel valued, motivated to stay active and participate in social life.

Home care services for the elderly involve an emotional component, which marks the senior's connection with the family members who care for him. Family involvement in home care services encourages seniors to remain in the family environment, experiencing the comfort and safety of home.

## Discussions

The evaluation of the policy effect of home care services is not only a crucial indicator for measuring the benefits of home care services, but also a vital factor in promoting the high level of quality of home care services, and it is also one of the core contents. of improving the theory of elderly care services.

Home care services are an important source of support for their clients due to the breadth of assistance provided [26]: identifying and assessing acute medical problems, assisting in the management of chronic conditions, advocating for client needs, keeping clients safe, combating depression and anxiety. Existing evidence suggests that the caring relationship between home health workers and long-term care recipients is valued by family members as well as clients.

In contrast, sporadic caregiving relationships pose medical, social, and safety risks. On the other hand, there is the finding that providing continuity of home care services achieves functional outcomes among clients and supports their well-being.

## Conclusions

The literature review revealed some common features that emphasize that the use of home care services for the elderly is influenced by a number of factors. The demand for services for the care of the elderly has increased as a result of the aging of the population, but the offer of services is poorly developed and does not cover the basic needs of this population category [27]

Governmental decision-making bodies are obliged to ensure the development of public and social policies that: support the training of specialists and the financing of community care services for seniors at home; improving the accessibility of elderly care services and increasing the types and number of institutional projects for elderly services; the availability and adaptability of care services to the needs of the elderly [28].

To increase the sense of belonging among older people receiving home health care, the health system and the community need to understand and accept the addictions of older people in a way that recognizes them as valuable individuals.

Family members play a decisive role in ensuring a high level of life satisfaction, taking into account the social problems they face and the ability of families to meet socio-medical needs.

Home care services significantly improve the quality of life of older adults by promoting independence, social connections, and health management [29]. These services allow seniors to live safely at home while receiving personalized support in daily activities that preserve their dignity and autonomy.

Home caregivers also provide companionship, reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation that are common among the elderly. At the same time, elder care at home facilitates the control of chronic conditions through regular supervision and education, leading to better health outcomes and fewer hospitalizations. Elderly people face various physical, financial, psychological and social challenges that require family support to achieve well-being in old age.

This theoretical study aimed to reveal the role of the family in increasing the quality of life of seniors, appreciating the family as having considerable roles of care and emotional support. Elderly people need the support of their loved ones to maintain their physical, emotional and social balance.

Therefore, improving elderly care services are key measures to increase their quality and achieve the "inclusive" elderly care policy.

The effective measure to address the problem of population aging is the implementation of an evaluation standard for increasing the integration of care services for the elderly in community practice.

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