

# Research on the Phenomenon of End-of-Life Care for Empty Nesters from the Perspective of Social Security

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**Abstract:** *The aging problem is a population problem that China must face and pay attention to at this stage, and China has already entered an aging society in 2000, and the phenomenon of "getting old before getting rich" has appeared. However, while aging brings challenges to China's socio-economic development, it also brings opportunities, such as the development of the elderly social service industry to provide employment opportunities for some people. As a part of the pension system, hospice care should be valued and promoted, but due to the influence of China's traditional view of life and death and the fact that hospice care is not included in the medical insurance system, the concept of hospice care has not been widely publicized, the hospice cause has not been developed as it should, and the hospice care of empty nesters is even more difficult. This paper will analyze the current situation of hospice care for empty nesters and the difficulties encountered in the development of hospice from the perspective of social security, so that more people can rationally choose hospice services.*

**Keywords:** *empty nesters, Hospice care, social security*

## 1. Introduction

According to the 2019 data of the National Bureau of Statistics, there are 176.03 million elderly people over 65 years old in China, of which 38.9% are suffering from one chronic disease, 31.7% are suffering from two chronic diseases, and 29.4% are suffering from three or more chronic diseases. On the one hand, overtreatment not only causes a waste of medical resources, but also brings both physical and mental suffering to patients and their families: on the other hand, the quality of life of patients before death is not guaranteed, and they can only complete the last journey of life in pain, panic and sadness, and it is impossible to talk about meeting the respect needs in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, and their families have to pay high medical expenses in addition to enduring mental pressure, thereby increasing the financial burden on the family. With the increase in the number of elderly people, especially those in the end-of-life period, the seriousness of this problem will be further highlighted, causing a series of social problems [1].

## 2. Research on the development status of hospice care

### 2.1. Current status of foreign development

As the birthplace of hospice in the UK, hospice institutions are distributed in most parts of the UK, and then with the trend of globalization, hospice has also developed in countries around the world. At present, the number and quality of hospice institutions in the United States have led the United Kingdom, in addition, the US government also attaches great importance to the education of hospice, and medical care personnel engaged in this profession can only engage in this work after relevant training; Canada has also developed more than 100 unique hospice institutions [2].

### 2.2. Domestic development status

The development of hospice care in China is relatively slow compared with foreign countries, Tianjin is the birthplace of hospice care in China, and then related hospice institutions have also appeared in China. In addition, the development of hospice in Taiwan is relatively fast, and Taiwan has formulated a series of laws and regulations to provide legal guarantees for the development of hospice institutions. In short, hospice care has now become a global activity, and all countries are committed to the research of

hospice to jointly promote the development of end-of-life care [3].

### ***2.3. Domestic hospice service model***

At present, there are three main types of family-type hospice care, independent hospice institutions, and affiliated hospice services of general hospitals in China, but they are all in the exploration stage and have no substantial development. Regarding the home hospice model suitable for China's national conditions, due to the lack of social support, it is even more stagnant, and the gap between professionals and professional services and social support is still too large with Western developed countries. Based on this, accelerating the development of China's professional care undertakings from the aspect of social security has a positive effect on coping with some problems in the aging society [4].

## **3. The current situation of hospice services for empty nesters in China**

### ***3.1. Children from empty-nest families are stressed and financially burdened***

Due to the implementation of the previous family planning policy, most of the current family structures are "421" one-child families, which has increased the pressure on the younger generation to support the elderly and raise children. According to the data of "China Statistical Yearbook 2019", China's children's dependency ratio is 23.7%, and the old-age dependency ratio is 16.8%, which also shows to a certain extent that children ignore the problem of parents' pension, and children have to move to economically developed areas in order to survive, leaving elderly parents unattended, and with the increase of age, the urban and rural elderly living alone population is also on the rise. On the one hand, widowhood can lead to the occurrence of the elderly living alone; On the other hand, children do not live with their elderly parents and do not make timely decisions for their parents when they encounter an emergency or face hospice services.

### ***3.2. Family security is weakened, and end-of-life care for empty nesters is lacking***

Since ancient times, families have assumed an extremely important function of providing for the elderly, but due to factors such as the acceleration of urbanization and uneven regional development, the scale of population migration has become more and more large. According to statistics, in 2018, China's floating population was 241 million, and the separated population of 286 million households created a large number of empty nest families. Therefore, the "home-based, community-based, institution-supplemented" old-age service system advocated by China is pale and powerless in the context of large-scale population movement, and "home" can only be empty nest elderly living alone at home, children because they are in other places can not provide them with careful care and spiritual comfort, let alone welfare institutions can provide free or cheap services. Therefore, empty nesters cannot enjoy corresponding services in the end-of-life stage, which ultimately makes empty nesters lack hospice services and cannot complete the final journey of life with dignity [5].

### ***3.3. Income disparities widen and end-of-life care has a clear imprint***

The goal of social security is to ensure the basics, and other needs for the dying elderly cannot be met, especially when the cost of hospice services is relatively high, commercial insurance needs to play a supplementary role. Empty nest families are generally less resilient to risks, and as long as one of the family members has an accident, the whole family will be in trouble, and the end-of-life problems of the elderly will not be effectively solved. The traditional view is that rural land has a security function, so even if the corresponding social security is not in place, there is land as a support, but the concept that land security can make up for the lack of social security is itself wrong, and with the increasing size of migrant worker groups and the policy of returning farmland to forest, the view that farmers still have land security is even more untenable [6]. In addition, most of the independent hospice institutions are located in cities and towns, and it is difficult to have decent hospice institutions in rural areas, but at present, there are more empty nesters in rural areas than in towns, which makes rural empty nesters even if they have the need for hospice care, but also due to economic and geographical restrictions and not satisfied.

### ***3.4. Resources are unevenly allocated***

At present, there is a lack of hospice personnel in China, and the professionalism of existing personnel is insufficient. Because hospice institutions are mostly concentrated in hospitals, doctors and nurses often hide their condition from patients and only tell their families the truth, and medical staff are also very shy about death, so it is difficult to talk about providing professional services for dying elderly [7]. In the fourth sample survey of physical health of the elderly in urban and rural areas, it was found that 392 people aged 85 and above still had no one to take care of. Among the elderly who are cared for, the caregivers are spouses, sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, domestic service personnel, other relatives, elderly care institution personnel and other caregivers, and the average age of the elderly care caregivers is 58.67, the age is generally older, which shows that there is currently a lack of young professional nursing teams in China. Finally, as a part of the elderly care service, hospice care ultimately consumes medical resources, so it needs to be included in the medical insurance system for reimbursement, so that on the one hand, it can reduce the psychological burden of the elderly and their children who receive hospice services; On the other hand, it is in line with international standards and establishes a more complete social security system [8].

## **4. Reflection and revelation**

### ***4.1. Strengthen the integration of resources***

China's social security system implements a multi-level social security system, and multi-level protection should also be implemented for hospice care, so as to promote all social forces to actively participate in the construction of hospice care [9].

#### ***4.1.1. Have uniform rules***

As of 2015, there are 2,103 medical institutions with hospice departments in China, 7,791 geriatric hospitals and 289 nursing homes providing corresponding services. However, since many of them are for-profit institutions and without the help of social charities, it is extremely difficult for individuals to bear high expenditures, so it is necessary to reform China's social donation system to solve the problems of government monopoly, low credibility and excessive restrictions in charities. In addition, local civil affairs systems should provide more supporting financial support and policy preferences, and relax or remove unnecessary restrictions [10]. In the charitable organizations themselves, due to the main focus on education assistance and disaster relief, and the lack of human and financial investment in hospice care, there is still a lot of room for improvement in the operation of these charitable organizations, such as cooperating with medical institutions or improving their own public trust system; Actively publicize the necessity of hospice care, publicize the demand for hospice services in China under the current situation of aging, and call on more social volunteer organizations to pay attention to and join the construction of hospice services [11].

#### ***4.1.2. Strengthen the spirit of volunteerism among citizens***

In the case that the support of the elderly population in our country is higher and higher year by year, we should promote the spirit of volunteer service to the public, help each other among citizens, and solve the problem of insufficient hospice personnel. In this regard, reference can be drawn to the time storage scheme implemented in Germany in response to the ageing of the population, whereby young people can use their leisure time to provide voluntary activities and there are records that they can use to enjoy the volunteer services of others in their old age. It is important to note that the training of volunteers is a prerequisite for the implementation of this program, as hospice itself is a highly specialized discipline that requires people with professional knowledge and skills.

### ***4.2. Clarify the government's responsibilities in end-of-life care***

#### ***4.2.1. Improve the relevant laws on hospice care***

The lack of relevant legal systems in the field of hospice care in China has become one of the important factors restricting its development, according to the development time of social security in various countries, it can be seen that various social security systems should adhere to legislation first [12]. Since hospice care is part of the elderly care service, the government should clarify the status of the government's responsible subject through relevant laws and regulations, and at the same time clarify the extent of the government's financial support, how the central and local governments divide labor, and the

division of labor between various departments to avoid mutual blame.

#### **4.2.2. Improve the relevant laws on hospice care**

While actively introducing market mechanisms in the field of hospice, the government should also intervene accordingly, such as clearly stipulating the access rules of hospice institutions, the qualifications of personnel who provide professional services, and regular work reviews of hospice institutions; Charities whose donations must be publicly announced in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charity Law [13]. In addition, existing network technology can be used to establish a monitoring and exposure platform to ensure that the government's financial support and charitable donations are used where they should be.

#### **4.2.3. Integrate end-of-life care into the health care system**

Hospice requires professional services, and since it falls within the scope of medical care, it should be included in the health insurance system. At present, China's medical insurance has a starting line and a ceiling line, but based on the different performance of each elderly person in the hospice stage, some elderly hospice care may only take a few days, can not reach the medical insurance threshold line, so you can consider canceling the hospice service for medical insurance reimbursement of the starting line, for families receiving hospice care can appropriately increase the proportion of medical insurance reimbursement, attracting more families to receive hospice services [14].

#### **4.3. Cultivate a professional team for hospice care**

Set up a special hospice education major in colleges and universities, especially in the training of community doctors, you need to learn hospice-related courses and take exams, and only after passing can you become a community doctor, which is conducive to the establishment of a "home-based, community-based, institution-supplemented" elderly care service system [15]. In addition, hospice needs professional services, so volunteers should be professionally trained while participating in the hospice business, and teachers and professors of hospice majors in colleges and universities can serve as mentors in training centers to provide theoretical and practical support to volunteers, and can also use cloud services to provide online training courses.

### **5. Conclusion**

With the deepening of China's aging, people's desire to improve the quality of life in old age is also getting stronger. In order to meet the huge demand for hospice care in institutions and promote the sustainable development of hospice services in elderly care institutions, it is necessary to strengthen the integration of resources, clarify the government's responsibilities in hospice care, and more importantly, cultivate a professional team of hospice care.

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