

Housing Design for Senior Citizens - the Software Aspect

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Introduction

In designing housing for senior citizen whether it is in the form of small self-contained flats, sheltered housing schemes, hostels, homes for the aged, care and attention homes and nursing homes etc., the expectations and needs of the elderly must be taken into consideration. For a quality elderly residential care home it is important firstly to satisfy the licensing requirements. The design and layout should include all the necessary facilities, furniture and equipment so that the housing provision would suit the lifestyle of the elderly residents and that services can be delivered efficiently. It's equally important to have well designed software programmes for the day-to-day operation to ensure that quality services to be provided are up to the needs of the elderly.

The Software

This does not simply mean IT and definitely not excluding IT. The software design should include:

1. **Systems** - There should be a set of policy and procedural manuals which will be used for training staff of all levels and then to use them to monitor standards of service. This will include:
 - i. Elderly Resident's Handbook
 - ii. Client Policies & Procedures
 - iii. Clinical Policies & Procedures
 - iv. Operational Policies & Procedures (General)
 - v. Operational Policies & Procedures (Delegation of Authority)
 - vi. Infection Control Manual
 - vii. Continuous Quality Improvement Training
 - viii. Continuous Quality Improvement Audit
 - ix. Personnel Policies & Procedures
2. **Individualised Care Programme** - In order to set up individualised care programme all elderly residents should receive functional assessments in addition to health checks. This is useful to determine what types of personal and health care programme should be designed for each individual to make sure that the elderly would get occupational and physio therapy, special nursing care and social activities. The underlying principle is to design individualised programme taking into consideration the health condition as well as expectation of the elderly and feedbacks from family members. In order to achieve this, focus groups will be organised and a formal feedback system including the use of questionnaires will have to be set up.

The Role of Private Sector in Improving the Housing Design for Senior Citizens

There has not been a lot of research done to gather the views and preference of facilities in housing design for senior citizens. In many instances the focus has been to provide institutionalised setting to satisfy the efficient management of the facilities but not to the expectation and aspiration of the elderly residents. It is now necessary to spend effort to get to know their views and expectation on the design aspect so that the housing provision and facilities will meet with their needs and satisfy their wish. With the relevant feedback and information, the private sector will be more readily able to produce the product that would suit the elderly. These would include special design for life-long communities which would satisfy the objectives of "ageing in place" and "continuum of care" by providing community support services such as nursing and home care, meals on wheels, social and recreational activities either on site or nearby as in the case of "assisted living" in other countries.

Conclusion

It's imperative that there must be one standard of service no matter what types of housing are to be provided for the elderly. The needs of the elderly must be carefully studied and the housing design and services delivered should meet with the aspiration and needs of the elderly i.e. must be customer focused. It must be stressed that both the

hardware and the software design must take local circumstances, environment, culture and tradition etc into consideration. It is observed that licensing conditions and regulations are fairly basic requirements. In order to provide better service the products must be improved as experience is gained in serving the elderly. There should be monitoring mechanism to make sure that the standard can be sustainable and maintainable. It is hoped that service quality standards can be set up for the service provider to observe with a view to provide ever improving service to the elderly while the cost can be maintained at reasonable level.

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