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Health care for elderly people in rural Japan: Current position & future strategies

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Aim: Japan's elderly population, particularly in rural areas, relies heavily on health-medical-welfare services for its care. The establishment and monitoring of a comprehensive health care system is therefore critical to the future of Japanese care for elderly people. There is, however, little or no research into health-medical-welfare services and their provision in Japan. In fact, there is only limited knowledge of the issue with respect to Japan's rural areas. In this review, we aim to identify the present state and challenges of the health care system and its role in advancing health care in rural Japan. By better understanding the current state of Japan's health care system, efforts can be made to improve it and the quality of care for Japan's elderly population.

Methods: Electronic databases such as CiNii, ICHUSHI, PubMed, CINAHL and Google Scholar were searched to retrieve peer-reviewed primary research literature. A narrative synthesis of the findings sections of the papers was applied to identify key themes. These themes consider the relationship between different stakeholders in the comprehensive community care system: Medical care, Nursing care, Residence and home living support / Care prevention.

Results: Eight papers were included in the review.

Conclusions: The synthesis identifies that health-medical-welfare services in rural areas of Japan may prove effective if they are properly established, adequately managed, monitored and continuously improved. Although additional research is required to examine the issues with health-medical-welfare services, the studies undertaken to date highlight various problem areas with community health care in rural Japan.

Biography

Yoshiyuki Nagaya was a registered nurse in Japan. At present, he is an assistant professor at Kansai University of Social welfare. Previously, he completed a Master of Health Services Management and planning at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia. He is concerned about health care for elderly people in rural Japan and the impact of this could have on the delivery of quality health care in Japan. This has led him to research the various issues contributing to difficulties in quality health care for elderly people in Japan.

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