

Background and Objectives

Japan has the highest proportion of elderly citizens in the world. This “hyper-aging” trend will continue for the next decades due to the current falling birthrate and rising life expectancy. This salient situation has been imposing unprecedented economic and social difficulties on the Japanese government. In particular, the accumulating expenses of annuity, medical treatment, and long-term health care programs are a critical consideration for the government, while tax revenues are declining due to a shrinking labor-force.

“Long-Term Care Insurance” is one Japanese social insurance system that was started from 2000, and supports an increasing number of elderly people who need nursing care and medical treatment. The system aims to relieve the financial burden on the government and also to reduce the burden faced by the younger generation who support the elderly. A revision of the system in 2006 placed more emphasis on proactive preventive care than immediate treatment/care in response to a rapid increase in the number of people who only need light support. The policy goal of preventive care is to reduce the number of elderly people who need nursing care and insurance support by improving the quality of elderly life through encouraging them in making efforts to maintain their health and physical mobility, and participate in social and community activities.

The situation of aging communities varies by national region, and the City of Toyama has been going through faster aging and shrinking of population compared to other cities in Japan with similar population size. The proportion of elderly citizens over the age of 65 is currently 28% (2016), and is estimated to reach about 30% by 2020. Kadokawa Care Prevention Center established in 2011 by Toyama City is a leading example of preventive care in Japan. The center provides special facilities and unique programs specialized in improving and maintaining the health condition and physical mobility of the elderly. By liaising with other local networks to enhance the health and well-being of elderly people, a comprehensive care system has been developed in the city. The Care Prevention Center is also unique in terms of being an integral part of the city’s policy of revitalizing the city center.

Project Overview

Kadokawa Care Prevention Center was established by Toyama City using donations from citizens and the city budget. In 2004, one citizen donated hundreds of millions of yen to the city for the improvement of social welfare services for elderly citizens, and in 2007, the city decided to build a special center for preventive care on the site of a demolished

elementary school. The city also received valuable and useful assets (i.e., hot spring facilities and special apparatus for exercise) from several citizens before it began operating in July 2011. While the property is owned by the city, the facility is operated and managed by a joint venture of private companies (see Table 1 for details about the facility).

Kadokawa Nursing Care Prevention Center

Table 1: Overview of Kadokawa Care Prevention Center

Owner	City of Toyama
Building	Reinforced concrete structure with steel frames used partially, two story building
Floor Area	5,038.07m ² (of them, 2,538.94m ² for Care Prevention Center)
Facilities	A building complex composed of a care prevention center, a central health and welfare center, and examination board room for Long-Term Care Insurance
On 1st floor	Multipurpose pool, training room, power rehabilitation room
On 2nd floor	Light exercise room
Total Project Cost	JPY 1.943 billion (of them, JPY 73.01 million funded from Community Renovation Grant)
Operation and Management	Joint venture of Hokuriku Yobouibaku Kyokai and Wellness Development Corp. (a designated administrator)

Source: Longevity and Welfare Section, Health and Welfare Department, City of Toyama. 9 July, 2015. Toyama's policy for elderly people (a report provided by the City of Toyama).

Toyama City demolished and integrated several schools due to the shrinking and aging demographic context and utilized one of them for the site of the Prevention Care Center. The Center is located in the downtown area and highly accessible by public transportation such as bus, light rail transit (LRT), and community bus from JR Toyama Station.

Personalized Programs and Special Facilities for Care Prevention

Specialized in preventive care, the center provides a variety of progressive exercise regimens, such as aquatic exercise therapy, land exercise therapy, thermotherapy, and power rehabilitation. The aquatic exercise in a pool for care prevention (Photo 1) was first introduced in Japan, and has several notable merits including reduced load to knee joints and lower back while elderly people do exercise. The hot spring water that is used in the pool accelerates blood circulation, relieves pain, and improves the moisturizing function of skin with mineral components in the natural water. The center has multiple full-time specialists, including medical doctors and specialized staff, who provide advice to users so they can customize their own personal

programs. Staff also conduct comprehensive health assessment by measuring muscular strength, walking ability, and blood pressure, and then make suggestions on a special exercise plan for individuals.



Photo 1: Multifunctional Pool with Hot Spring Water

Source: Toyama City Kadokawa Care Prevention Center.
<http://www.kadokawakaigo.jp/>

Users of the Center

The services provided by the center are limited to people who are: i) certified by the Long-term Care Insurance system, ii) older than 65 years with knee or lower back pain, or iii) older than 40 years in need of early proactive care prevention (e.g., metabolic syndrome). These criteria are set on the basis of whether other elderly people can use alternative

public/private facilities and services, such as private fitness centers for the healthy elderly and home-visiting rehabilitations for people who need more serious care (Figure 1). The users also have to pay a membership fee of at least JPY 7,200 monthly or JPY 72,000 annually, which is not cheap for all potential users especially for retirees. However, the number of users has been continuously increasing since the center opened.

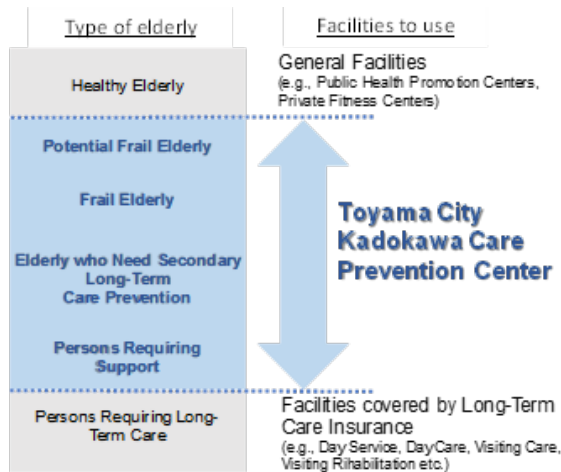


Figure 1: Type of elderly who can use Kadokawa Care Prevention Center

Source: Toyama City Kadokawa Care Prevention Center. <http://www.kadokawakaigo.jp/>

Local Network for Preventive Care

Toyama City is promoting integrated and inclusive care services for the elderly population, and local networks play a key role. The city has 32 community general support centers as contact points for the elderly people in each community, where experts (e.g. nurses, certified social workers, welfare caretakers) monitor and guide the health of the elderly people and advise them to attend the Kadokawa Care Prevention Center, when necessary. The city also works together with the Senior Citizens Club, a city-based voluntary organization which 36% of all the elderly citizens of the city have joined. The city asks several members in the club to take a leadership role in promoting community-based activities for preventive care and communicating with the support centers and the City of Toyama. This community-based

approach also helps members become more aware of their own health, and it enhances self-reliance and encourages mutual help among communities.

Project Impacts

Economic Impact:

Decrease in the elderly population who need major support from the Long-term Care Insurance System and also the Health Insurance System. This decrease would in turn reduce the cost of the public insurance system.

Social Impact:

The Care Prevention Center helps elderly people keep active and live long, self-reliant lives. In fact, one assessment of 141 members of the center over three months proved that there was a positive influence of exercise on their physical and mental condition. This result also revealed that their standing and walking abilities had noticeably improved and they became aware of improved physical and mental conditions¹.

Environmental Impact:

As the roof top and side walls are covered in greenery and equipped with a solar power generator (3kW), these facilities contribute to alleviating heat-island effects and saving energy. The facility location in the city center can be easily accessed by public transportation rather than private vehicles so that it contributes to reducing road traffic congestion, accidents, and, in turn, CO₂ emissions.

Lessons Learned

The inclusive care prevention and health maintenance system is expected to help elderly citizens live actively. Accompanied by the promotion of urban revitalization that cost-effectively offers easier access to public services, safer neighborhoods, and more interactive social spaces for enhancing the quality of elderly life, the Center plays an

Kadokawa Nursing Care Prevention Center

important public role. Key lessons from the case of Toyama City Kadokawa Care Prevention Center are summarized below.

Promoting a Concept of Care Prevention:

Preventive care is one of the critical concepts to be applied in a rapidly aging society, which could enhance the well-being of the elderly, and reduce the financial burden of individuals and public services. It can support elderly people to have a self-reliant life and decrease the number of frail elderly citizens who need careful long-term nursing. Integrating preventive care services with other nursing and health care services provided by other public services and networking with local communities can provide higher quality of services more effectively and efficiently.

Proactively Repurposing Public Assets:

In aging rural cities, the population aging rate is higher in the city center, and therefore it is important to make the city center more elderly-friendly. This means making the area safe, habitable and accessible to the elderly. In the context of an aging downtown area, unused sites or old facilities (e.g., abandoned schools) can be utilized for projects that enhance the quality of life of the elderly, like the Kadokawa Preventive Care Center. Proactive repurposing of unused land and old facilities can reduce the initial cost of such projects.

Varied Financial Arrangement:

As public spending on social welfare programs continues to grow in the recent aging trend, it is hard to expect further public resource allocations to long-term care projects for the elderly. Under severe budget constraints, local governments must make great efforts to raise capital funds from diverse resources. The government might be able to utilize unused

sites for projects, grant a concession to private operators, and ask for a variety of contributions from citizens and/or private companies (e.g., cash donation, land parcels, related apparatus, etc.).

Future Challenges

Since 2006 when national policy emphasized the importance of preventive, inclusive and comprehensive care, a large number of healthcare centers have been established to support the increasing elderly population across Japan. The high-quality facilities and new services provided by Kadokawa Care Prevention Center are successfully appealing to many old people and regarded as a pilot model that can cope with emerging health and nursing problems in an aging society. Kadokawa Care Prevention Center was built on the site of a public facility and with generous donations from citizens, but it would not be easy to develop large-scale care prevention centers for many other local governments under the current severe funding conditions. It is essential to explore new funding resources or different project approaches in collaboration with various stakeholders, including venture capital and start-up enterprises.

¹ Domestic release on 17 July, 2012 of Kyodo News PR Wire. <http://prw.kyodonews.jp/opn/release/201207115600/>

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