

Community Development Contributing to Preventive Care for Elderly People in Urban Areas of Japan

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There are concerns about the accelerating aging of Japan's population in urban areas. Many residential areas and complexes have been developed to provide housing for people who migrated to urban areas during the period of rapid economic growth. However, these areas are already experiencing significant aging, with the increase in elderly and single-person households and a weakening of local communities becoming major problems.

Preventive care can enable elderly people to live independently and lead meaningful lives in the areas they know. For elderly people to actively participate in and continue community activities, "places of activity" and "connections" for them must be re-established.

Here, we present ongoing preventive care case studies in an urban community. The first is an initiative to promote independent group activities led by elderly people themselves, using community centers as a place for activities. The intervention group implemented a care prevention approach that emphasized the empowerment of elderly people, whereas the control group received lectures on preventive care. After 6 months of intervention, each group moved to independent group activities, but the control group disbanded due to difficulties in independent activities, whereas the intervention group has continued its activities for 12 years to date.

We would like to consider the process by which elderly people continue to take an active role in the local community.

The second is a preventive care initiative in collaboration with the housing management company and care service providers in a housing complex where the aging rate is approximately 50%. We conducted regular frailty checks and provided feedback to elderly residents at the complex's community center and encouraged their motivation and participation in preventive care. In parallel, we conducted a questionnaire survey of all elderly residents in the housing complex once a year.

We would like to discuss the importance of preventive care based on assessment in the local community and collaboration with local stakeholders.

The role of occupational therapists in preventive care is to consider the characteristics of local communities, empower elderly people, and actively participate in building local communities that support activities led by elderly people themselves.