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Living with Care: The Older Person. BSc Health and
Social Care Level 6 Term1 Assignment 2: Debate Topic:
Does population Ageing pose challenges for health and
social care systems

Supporting Paper for the Debate

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Standpoint in the Debate

Our perspective in this debate argues that the ageing population has no negative impacts on health and social care systems. Instead, we posit that this demographic shift presents a chance to innovate and adapt. In support of this position, we emphasize the importance of older persons within society through their socio-economic contributions (Cook, 2011), their involvement in volunteer activities to minimize pressure on the healthcare system and demonstrate how improved healthcare technology can be used to take care of elderly population more effectively (Czaja et al., 2013). Besides, (Older people contribute £61bn to the economy, n.d.) contradicts the idea that they are a burden since they also play a key role in enhancing economic activities. These factors thus imply that an ageing population can be effectively assimilated into existing ones without causing any harm.

Alternative Perspectives

Opposing viewpoints in the debate were about issues faced by health and social care systems because of an ageing population. Various arguments were raised highlighting financial constraints due to rising healthcare costs and specialized services for the old population (Howdon and Rice, 2018). Besides, they added their voice by pointing out the human resource needs necessary for meeting the specific requirements of older adults as well as inadequate infrastructure (Gonzales, Matz-Costa, and Morrow-Howell, 2015). Also, there was discussion related to the insufficiency of infrastructures for accommodating health care systems as well as social services particularly when it comes to loneliness and isolation among aged citizens (Kingston et al., 2018).

Reflection on Key Points Discussed

The debate provided a comprehensive understanding of how an ageing population affects healthcare provision directly or indirectly within the different nations or societies around the globe. On one hand, our stance emphasized the positive contributions of older adults such as their socio-economic benefits (Cook, 2011), and the reduction of volunteering in the healthcare system (Letters, 2021) among others. Issues about technological advancements and the economic significance of older people were also raised. This points towards the fact that health and social care systems are faced with numerous challenges emanating from ageing.

On the other hand, the opposing arguments focused on significant challenges including financial costs due to rising healthcare demands (Howdon & Rice, 2018), human resource shortages as

well and infrastructure gaps (Gonzales et al., 2015). Additionally, during the debate, there were remarks regarding the lack of good infrastructure in health and social care that can help cope with increasing demand for these services as well as possible consequences such as loneliness and social isolation (Kingston et al., 2018).

Evaluating the effectiveness of these arguments reveals that both standpoints have their strengths. The authors of this paper also provided a different point of view. Nonetheless, another perspective focusing on adaptability over time and the unexploited potentiality of the ageing population is optimistic and sustainable in nature (Older people contribute £61bn to the economy, n.d.; Gonzales et al., 2015; Howdon & Rice, 2018). This indicates that immediate challenges go together with long-term possibilities for innovation or improvement with respect to care systems within the healthcare sector.

Statistics on the Ageing UK Population

The UK is experiencing a major shift in its demographics whereby it is becoming an aging nation. According to recent data, the share of people aged 65 and above has been steadily increasing, thus leading to an older median age (Kingston et al., 2018). This trend can be attributed to increased life expectancy as well as decreased fertility rate which results in a higher percentage of older adults among the general population.

As per the statistics, approximately 18% of the entire UK population is aged 65 years or over. Moreover, the number of individuals who are likely to live beyond their 85th birthday will double within the next two decades (Kluge et al., 2014). This shift has significant consequences on health and social care systems including resource allocation as well as service delivery.

In connection with that dispute, these figures are essential. They indicate that health and social care services should be developed which will cope with an ageing population. Nonetheless, our position contends that this demographic change need not come with any negative implications. The figures show how important it is for healthcare and social care systems to adapt to these changing needs. However, such data also suggest possible possibilities for innovation especially in relation to better medical technology (Czaja et al., 2013) and harnessing economic resources from elderly groups (Cook, 2011). Thus, these statistics do not suggest insurmountable challenges but rather point towards strategic planning and flexibility within health and social care systems.

Government Support and Services for the UK Elderly Population

The British government has enacted various policies and services aimed at assisting old people with the diverse health and societal demands they face every day. Provision of state pension funds, a free national healthcare system for preventative measures against diseases like cancer or tuberculosis by using vaccines, and several other programs have been implemented so far. Moreover, such programmes have focused on ending loneliness among older citizens such as the Ageing Better fund by the government (Oliver, 2019). Nevertheless, there are gaps in these services specifically for personalized or home care which is increasingly important with many older adults seeking to age at home. By incorporating more technology-based solutions in existing services (Peek et al., 2014) and expanding community-based programs that promote active ageing and social engagement, the current service system can be improved. This would go a long way in not only improving the quality of life for older persons but also contributing to sustainable health and social care systems amidst changing demographic trends.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Older Population and Services

The consequences of COVID-19 for older adults were therefore different from those experienced by other groups since they were greatly affected both in terms of health and social care provision. The elderly, being most prone to severe complications from this virus, faced greater risks to their lives accompanied by more demand for medical help. This put additional pressure on healthcare systems that were already constrained due to the pandemic (Kespichayawattana & Jitapunkul, 2008). As a result, social care services became disrupted as lockdowns coupled with social distancing measures worsened loneliness as well as isolation among old people. Therefore, there is a need for health and social care systems that can be relied upon even during crisis situations like pandemics. Some long-term consequences include increased use of telehealth and remote care services; and greater emphasis on mental health support for seniors; all signifying changes in how such services will be delivered as well as their priorities post-COVID-19.

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