

central role in preventing institutionalization and families generally carry out this task without hesitation or recrimination. Of course, as Walker would argue, families also help to encourage and maintain the dependent status of the elderly.

Social Services

John E. Tibbitt

Kramer, Jane and Piachaud, David: 'The micro-economics of old peoples homes', *British Journal of Social Work*, 12, 1982, 171–87.

The amount of money people have at their disposal and their degree of control over its use are probably the most fundamental determinants of life-style and freedom of choice in present day society. In times when policies of normalization underpin the development of regimes in residential care of the elderly it is perhaps surprising that questions about the availability of money to residents and their opportunities for and patterns of expenditure have received so little attention in the literature. This paper presents the results of a small research study into the role of money in residential care and highlights some important issues which arise.

The study was conducted in 11 homes (9 local authority and 2 voluntary), and used loosely structured methods to discover practices used for the administration of money in each home and to understand residents' involvement with handling their own money. For almost all clients in the local authority homes, but few in the voluntary homes, pension books were held centrally and a personal allowance, the balance after accommodation charges had been deducted, paid to residents by a variety of more or less formal or public methods. Only about half the residents realized the personal allowance was money from social security rather than from charity or the home itself. None of them understood how the allowance was calculated. Almost all though the allowance (at the time of the research £4.65 per week) was plenty of money since the home provided for all their daily needs.

It was not possible for the research to investigate 'need' for money. Essentially the money was seen as being for 'extras' – sweets, toiletries and the like. Some residents had accounts for newspapers in shops, a hairdresser visited each home, and some had private arrangements either with fitter residents, relatives, or voluntary visitors to purchase other items required. Few of those interviewed ever visited external shops, but all

homes had either an internal shop or a trolley. Some residents expressed frustration at having to ask for things to be brought on their behalf, the limited range of goods available in internal shops, and the lack of opportunity to make private arrangements over such things as laundry.

The researchers conclude that such was the range of goods and services supplied directly by the home that most residents had ceased to make any substantial economic choices. A stark contrast is drawn between the host of economic decisions faced by old people living in their own homes and the opportunities for maintaining links with the community provided by shopping trips, and the system of total care in many institutions where no decisions and no shopping is required and where money tends to be regarded with little importance. Lack of control over money, and the dependency thus created may have severe social repercussions on their psychological well-being.

COMMENT

This paper usefully contributes to the filling of a real gap in the literature on residential care of the elderly. As the authors concede it is an exploratory study which can make no claims for representativeness. Nevertheless it does draw attention to an often neglected aspect of practice in residential care. The paper illustrates powerfully how the development of residential care on a domestic living model will be fundamentally undermined if the neglect of the elderly resident as an economic being is continued.

Tesch S, Whitbourne, Krauss, Susan and Nehrke, Milton F: 'Friendship, social interaction and subjective well-being of older men in an institutional setting', *International Journal of Ageing and Human Development*, 13, 4, 1981.

This paper is concerned with the contribution of social relationships with friends and relatives to the subjective well-being of older people, in particular among men living in a Veterans Administration Centre in New York.

Some 54 residents participated in the study, all described as being 'in relatively good health, ambulatory, and legally competent'. Subjective well-being was assessed on the Philadelphia Geriatric Center Morale

Scale and using the MACC Behavioural Adjustment Scale. In addition, each resident was given a 'sociometric interview' which covered contacts with relatives and friends outside the VA Centre and with peers inside it, and also investigated perceived changes in social interaction, peer friendship, and the existence of close 'confident' relationships. Scores on these variables were correlated with scores on the well-being scales.

A positive correlation, though not a strong one, was obtained between morale and social interaction outside the home, but men's friendships within the institution were not related to morale. Men who reported an overall change of frequency of social interaction scored substantially lower on the morale scale than those who perceived no change. The researchers conclude that the results provide marginal support for the hypothesis consistent with a continuity model of ageing in, which feelings of well-being are associated with lack of disturbance of established patterns of social interaction.

COMMENT

Not all the hypotheses predicted by the authors on the basis of their search of other literature were supported by the relationships found between the scales used in this study, and other relationships, whilst present, were not very strong. It is likely that features of the institution and the characteristics of the residents may have intervened in these relationships. It is a pity the study did not pay more systematic attention to these aspects of institutional life in order to provide a more thorough analysis of the important aspects of ageing with which it is concerned.

Social Work Services Group, Edinburgh