

# Exploration of Training Models for Elderly Care Service Talents

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**Abstract:** This paper explores diversified training models and development pathways for elderly care service talents in China. Addressing the challenges of an aging population and a shortage of qualified professionals, the training of elderly care service talents should adhere to the principle of categorized and stratified approaches, promoting specialized and standardized training in urban areas, and localized and practical empowerment in rural areas. Against the backdrop of integrated medical-care and health-care convergence, talents are required to possess comprehensive literacy integrating “medical care, health maintenance, rehabilitation, nursing, and education.” Higher education institutions should break down disciplinary barriers and construct interdisciplinary curriculum systems. Furthermore, the philosophy of elderly care is shifting from “passive support” to “active enjoyment,” necessitating an enhancement of humanistic care and cultural awareness in talent training. Smart elderly care and international cooperation demand that talents possess technological literacy and a global perspective. This paper concludes by proposing measures to build a modernized and systematic new talent training framework and identifies future research directions.

**Keywords:** Elderly care service talents; Talent training; Integrated healthcare

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## 1. Introduction: The need for diversified training pathways

China’s rapidly aging population has created a significant structural shortage of elderly care service talents, particularly high-quality and specialized professionals<sup>[1]</sup>. This shortage directly constrains the improvement and high-quality development of the elderly care service system. Addressing this challenge requires a systematic exploration of training standards, occupational attractiveness, and long-term mechanisms. This paper provides a narrative review of the existing literature on elderly care service talent training models, identifying key trends and challenges. It aims to offer insights for policymakers and educators to develop more effective and responsive training programs.

## 2. Methods

This paper is a narrative review of the literature on elderly care service talent training models. The review included

academic articles, policy documents, and reports related to elderly care workforce development in China and selected international contexts. Databases searched (via Google Scholar due to limited information on the original author's access) included CNKI for Chinese sources and general Google Scholar searches for English language sources. Keywords included “elderly care training,” “aged care workforce,” “geriatric care education,” and related terms in both English and Chinese. Inclusion criteria prioritized articles focusing on formal training programs, competency frameworks, and policy initiatives related to the elderly care workforce development. Exclusion criteria included articles primarily focused on clinical care delivery without a specific focus on workforce training. The literature was synthesized thematically, focusing on identifying key models, challenges, and future directions. Due to the nature of a narrative review, a formal quality assessment of included studies was not performed.

### **3. Exploration of diverse pathways and models for training elderly care service talents**

The construction of the elderly care service talent team necessitates a nuanced approach. Zheng<sup>[2]</sup> proposed that the construction of the elderly care service talent team follows two paths: “specialization” and “localization.” Urban areas tend towards specialization, emphasizing professionalism, standardization, and exogenous training; whereas rural areas rely more on localization models, focusing on versatility, endogeneity, and flexible management to adapt to the practical conditions of rural elderly care services. Chen *et al.*<sup>[3]</sup>, from the perspective of higher education and using Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine as an example, constructed an undergraduate talent training system described as “one core, two integrations, three platforms, four stages,” emphasizing the goal of cultivating compound talents with “profound knowledge, integrated humanistic qualities, service understanding, and management expertise.”

The training of elderly care service talents is a complex, systematic project that should avoid simplistic “one-size-fits-all” approaches. It must be based on multidimensional differences, such as region, culture, and economy, to build a new pattern of multi-level and differentiated “categorized and stratified” training. This means that in large and medium-sized cities with diverse elderly care service demands, training should promote “refinement” and “standardization,” strengthening the deep integration of higher education, vocational education, and professional qualification systems. For rural and remote areas, emphasis should be placed on “localization” and “practicality,” focusing on digging and training local talents through targeted empowerment training and innovative position settings (e.g., “Rural Elderly Care Specialist”), to establish a grassroots elderly care service team that is “retainable and applicable.”

### **4. Reconstruction of talent competencies in the context of medical-care integration and health-care convergence**

The deepening integration of medical and elderly care services marks a new stage of development in elderly care, directly necessitating innovation in talent training models—shifting from single skills to a compound knowledge structure integrating medical nursing, health management, and humanistic care. Feng *et al.*<sup>[4]</sup> pointed out that the medical-care integration model requires elderly care service personnel not only to possess basic care skills but also to master comprehensive abilities such as basic medical knowledge, rehabilitation nursing, and psychological support. Liang<sup>[5]</sup>, through the analysis of UK practices in medical-care integration, emphasized the key role of interdisciplinary collaboration and community platforms in service integration, suggesting that talent training

should strengthen teamwork and resource integration capabilities.

Simultaneously, Lin <sup>[6]</sup> proposed the concept of “health-care convergence,” deeply integrating health management with elderly care services, marking a new phase in elderly care. He believes that future elderly care service talents need comprehensive literacy from the perspective of “comprehensive health,” including health monitoring, chronic disease management, and health promotion.

Looking forward, the core characteristic of elderly care service talents is possessing comprehensive literacy that integrates “medical care, health maintenance, rehabilitation, nursing, and education.” To achieve this goal, universities and vocational colleges must break down disciplinary barriers, offer interdisciplinary courses deeply integrating medicine, nursing, social work, management, and other majors, and build a compound knowledge system. At the same time, it is crucial to strongly enhance “integrated” training by strengthening practical teaching and real-world training to effectively resolve the disconnection between talent training and industry needs, comprehensively improving talents’ practical abilities and job competency.

## **5. Evolution of elderly care service concepts and cultural adaptation in talent training**

The field of elderly care services is undergoing a profound “paradigm shift”: the traditional concept of “elderly support,” focusing on passively meeting basic survival needs, is shifting towards a modern concept centered on the elderly and pursuing spiritual fulfillment—“enjoying later life”; past “passive care,” aimed at compensating for functional deficits, is being comprehensively upgraded to “active aging,” which stimulate the potential of the elderly and promotes social integration. This marks a fundamental change in how we view age and aging.

Han <sup>[7]</sup>, through a review of relevant research from 1994 to 2020, indicated that China’s research on the elderly care service system has evolved from “initial exploration” to “system optimization,” with the concept gradually emphasizing “people-centeredness” and “actively responding to population aging.” Hu <sup>[8]</sup>, from the perspective of family construction, proposed that home- and community-based elderly care should strengthen family functions and build a “Chinese-style elderly care life community,” reflecting the importance of cultural adaptation and localized practice.

The training of elderly care service talents needs to strengthen the two pillars of “humanistic” and “cultural awareness,” deepening the understanding of the physical, mental, and cultural needs of the elderly. Especially in localized practices such as dementia care, efforts should be made to cultivate compound talents with both professional skills and cultural sensitivity, achieving the distillation from “skillful care” to “spiritual resonance.”

## **6. New trends in talent development under technological empowerment and international perspective**

Informatization and intelligent technology are profoundly reshaping the industry ecology and operational models of elderly care services, which inevitably impose requirements on the competency structure of practitioners. Mastering and utilizing intelligent technology to provide efficient and precise “smart elderly care” services has become an indispensable core literacy for the new generation of elderly care talents.

Liu <sup>[9]</sup>, commenting on “The Construction Practice of Informatization in Home-Based Elderly Care Services,” pointed out that information technology brings new opportunities for home-based elderly care, and elderly care service talents need to master the use and management of basic information tools. Mi *et al.* <sup>[10]</sup>, through research on international cooperation networks in elderly care technology, found that high-breadth-high-depth cooperation

models are gradually becoming mainstream, suggesting that China should strengthen international cooperation and talent cultivation in the field of elderly care technology.

Looking ahead, elderly care service talents must forge the dual core competencies of “technological literacy” and “international perspective.” To this end, we should deeply integrate cutting-edge courses such as smart elderly care, data analysis, and telemedicine into the training system, and vigorously expand international exchange and overseas internship channels. This aims to enable talents to proactively absorb global wisdom and ultimately promote Chinese elderly care service standards to the world’s forefront.

## **7. Comparative analysis: International perspectives on elderly care training**

To provide a broader context, this section briefly compares China’s elderly care training system with those of Japan, the UK, and Germany.

**Japan:** Japan faces a similar aging population challenge and has a well-established system of long-term care (LTC) insurance. Their training pathways emphasize a tiered approach, with different levels of certification for caregivers (e.g., Certified Care Worker). There is a strong focus on practical skills and on-the-job training <sup>[11]</sup>.

**United Kingdom:** The UK’s integrated care system emphasizes collaboration between health and social care providers. Training programs for elderly care professionals often include elements of both health and social care, and there is a growing emphasis on person-centered care <sup>[12]</sup>. Qualification frameworks are being developed to standardize training and improve career progression.

**Germany:** Germany has a strong vocational training system for elderly nursing. Trainees undergo a three-year apprenticeship program that combines classroom instruction with practical experience in nursing homes and other care settings. The curriculum covers a wide range of topics, including medical care, rehabilitation, and social support <sup>[13]</sup>.

These international examples highlight the importance of standardized training, practical experience, and interdisciplinary collaboration in developing a skilled elderly care workforce.

## **8. Conclusion and outlook**

In summary, the training of elderly care service talents in China is undergoing a profound transformation, showing distinct trends of diversification, comprehensiveness, localization, and intellectualization. Facing the future, we must strive to build a modernized new talent training system oriented by social needs, based on core competencies, underpinned by humanistic care, and powered by intelligent technology. This requires policy-level strengthening of top-level design and systematic coordination, breaking down barriers between education, healthcare, social security, and other fields, forming synergies to jointly pave clear career development paths for elderly care service talents and vigorously enhance their social recognition and professional dignity.

To put this blueprint into practice, it is recommended to explore the establishment of a special “Elderly Care Service Talent Development Fund” to precisely support deep school-enterprise cooperation, the construction of high-level training bases, and overseas study for key talents, accelerating the introduction and transformation of advanced concepts and technologies. Simultaneously, a crucial step is to accelerate the establishment of a professional “Elderly Care Nurse Title Series,” fundamentally enhancing the professional status and attractiveness of this occupation through the establishment of a scientific evaluation and promotion system. Only through such multi-pronged measures can both symptoms and root causes be addressed, effectively resolving the long-standing

“talent shortage” bottleneck restricting industry development, and laying a solid talent foundation for actively responding to population aging.

Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of different training models, to identify the key competencies required for elderly care professionals in the future, and to develop innovative approaches to attract and retain talent in this critical sector.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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