An Issue for the Long-term Care Insurance System:  
The need for empowerment of family caregivers

ABSTRACT

The long-term care insurance system was implemented in April, 2000. It was supposed to encourage the elderly and their family caregivers to choose services they need most, and support their independent living in a community as long as possible. However, it has been noted that the family caregivers tend to choose institutional care rather than home care because it is more convenient for family caregivers to let the elderly be institutionalized. Due to this tendency, the elderly person who is at risk and needs institutional care has a hard time finding a proper place. In spite of recent research done by the government which indicates that some burdens of family caregivers are lessened, there are still many family caregivers who suffer from a heavy burden of care.

The purpose of this study is to discover the real problems of these family caregivers and discuss the need for empowerment of family caregivers. A focus group approach was taken with the family caregivers’ self-help group in an urban city. Results indicate that the caregivers of the elderly who need more personal care and medical care are mostly suffering from inadequate support under the present system. Although they seek help, their problems have not been solved because they do not have the means to influence the system. Implications for the empowerment of these family caregivers and the use of self-help groups are discussed.

Key Words: the long-term care insurance system, family caregivers, empowerment