

Japan's response to ageing

Challenges in socializing informal care with a tradition of family care

Haruko NOGUCHI

Waseda University

Japan's public long-term care insurance (LTCI) system was introduced in 2000, as care for older adults has become a social security issue as well as a family catastrophe. It provides formal care service for eligible beneficiaries with low copayment. Cash benefit for informal caregivers has not included yet in Japanese system, while other OECD countries have emphasized support for informal caregivers as potential human resources for their systems. Why did Japan choose this system? How much has the current LTCI system succeeded in "socializing care"? The impact of LTCI is evaluated in before-after difference in health, stress, and labour participation among female family caregivers by use of several nationally representative and community-based surveys from 1995 to 2007. Although the formal service use under LTCI was widely accepted and enhanced female labour participation, its impact on family caregivers' health and perceived stress reduction was only minimum up to 2007. Japanese challenge of the shift from traditional family-based toward society-based care still needs a breakthrough in family policies to achieve the efficacy and sustainability of the LTCI.