



**“ORDINARY LIFE”
IN NURSING HOMES AND GROUP LIVINGS
- The home-like image and real image of domestic circumstances
in housing for the elderly –**

Kazuoki OHARA

Dept. of Architecture, Yokohama National University, Yokohama, 240-5801 Japan
e-mail: ohara@ynu.ac.jp

Abstract

Institutions and dwellings for the elderly with physical or mentally infirmed have been changing into "housing models" in Japan. The model means physical environment for "ordinary", "home-like" and the place where "independent" care is conducted by staff members. The key-words are not concrete but just ideal and are difficult to share together. It is important that people concerning the institutions and housings have a common sense on these key words. We surveyed the image held by staff members in such institutions in photos shot by them as suitable scenes to depict these key-words. A lot of staff members in nursing homes, group livings for the elderly with dementia, senior housings and residential homes have given us over a thousand of photos. The study shows the framework and structure of the image of these concepts of key-words from analyzing the scenes in the photos.

Keywords: ordinary life, home-like, image, nursing home, group living

Introduction

Residential facilities, institutions and dwellings for the elderly with physical or mentally infirmed have been changing into "housing models" in Japan, providing a more residence-like environment instead of a facility-like environment. In other words, life in the facility as a group environment is kept at a distance, and a self-sufficient life, respecting the dignity of the resident, is provided by securing a living environment with an individual dwelling space and privacy. Many residential facilities for the elderly use keywords like “(to realize an) ordinary life” and its elements, such as “residence-like environment” and “home-like environment,” to promote themselves. However, the term “ordinary life” carries different meanings for different individuals.

Purpose and method

In order to arrive at a common understanding of the term “ordinary life,” which has hitherto been an obscure concept in the context of facilities for the elderly, this study attempts to clarify the environmental conditions which this term symbolizes, and that should be recommended to those striving

to provide an “ordinary life” to elderly people in their care. By understanding this term, we aim to provide guidance regarding the future direction of residential facilities for the elderly, which are moving toward providing more residence-like environments.

In this study, perceptions of what constitutes an “ordinary life” were first collected from a large sample of facility staff through a photographic survey and questionnaire. This asked what constituted providing and living an “ordinary life” in the eyes of the staff of residential facilities for the elderly.

Since “ordinary” cannot be understood from a single perspective, it is difficult to create a model of it. However, the meaning of “ordinary” can be converged upon by analyzing perceptions of “ordinary” held in common by many people.

The questionnaire was administered to staff at 45 training acceptance facilities (facilities with high awareness of nursing methods) across Japan, selected by the Dementia Care Research and Training Centre. The questionnaire was also administered to staff at 200 unit-type facilities, 200 conventional facilities (not unit-type), and 200 group homes, randomly selected from a national list of facilities for the elderly. Each participant was asked to take photographs of scenes at their facility that they believed symbolized keywords like “ordinary life.” For example, the questionnaire asked, “Please take a photograph of a scene in which an ordinary life is thought to be provided in your facility.” Participants were also required to submit a written explanation of the reasons for their choice of each scene.

To identify differences in perceptions according to occupational category, the questionnaire for this study was administered to managers, unit leaders, and general employees (the youngest person, or the person with the least nursing experience in the facility, was selected).

Keywords of “ordinary life”

Using the keywords “ordinary life” and “home-like environment,” as a starting point, participants were asked to take and submit photographs of scenes depicting the following five themes:

- A. Providing an ordinary life to a resident.
- B. Providing an ordinary life to a resident requiring a high level of nursing care.
- C. Providing a life that allows a resident to express their personality.
- D. Providing a life that allows a resident requiring a high level of nursing care to express their personality.
- E. Providing a home-like environment.

The result of the survey is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. The number of photographs collected from nursing homes and group homes

Theme of photograph	training acceptance facilities	unit-type facilities	conventional facilities (not unit-type)	group homes
A. Providing an ordinary life to a resident.	170	73	15	16
B. Providing an ordinary life to a resident requiring a high level of	129	63	11	9

nursing care.				
C. Providing a life that allows a resident to express their personality.	146	69	10	13
D. Providing a life that allows a resident requiring a high level of nursing care to express their personality.	131	62	10	12
E. Providing a home-like environment.	146	68	12	15

The staffs were also asked to document the reasons they believed their selected scenes fitted these criteria. Terms expressing the intentions of the photographers were then extracted from these texts.

The terms “continuation of an accustomed life,” “a free life without compulsion,” “originality of the individual resident,” “maintenance and display of an ability,” and “relationships among residents” appeared frequently in these explanations. Conversely, the term “facility-like environment,” relating to medical and protective facilities, was also used.

Many trends were observed in the photographs submitted. When actions were shown in the photographs, these were usually general household chores such cooking, washing, cleaning, and daily meals (including intubation feeding). Personal routines, hobbies, preferences, and special occasions were also portrayed.

Only photographs for which permission to publish was granted are inserted in this paper.

Images of an “ordinary life”

Many of the photographs were taken in indoor units and living rooms. In conventional facilities, no household chores were photographed, whereas in group homes, where residents prepare their own meals, many photographs were taken of this process, from buying ingredients to cooking the meals. However, there were no photographs of dining, which indicate that the staff of these facilities regard the cooking process as more important than dining itself.

It was characteristic of the training acceptance facilities that a larger number of photographs were taken of physical and environmental conditions, such as the locations and interior arrangements of living rooms, rather than of actions, and the largest number of action photographs portrayed dining, followed by household chores like cooking. This selection of subjects was reversed in unit-type facilities.



Images of an “home-like environment”

Many of the photographs intended to depict a “home-like environment” were taken in indoor units and living rooms. The largest number of these photographs were of the physical environment, such as the interior arrangement of living rooms, followed by photographs emphasizing the life history of residents, such as “maintenance and display of an ability” and “continuation of an accustomed life.” The former term means that residents are able to make use of their household-related abilities. The latter means that residents try to secure continuity in their living arrangements through furnishings that they have used for a long time.

Even in photographs of actions, the interior arrangement of living rooms was often directly photographed to provide context and explanation. These photographs showed decorations around beds and in spaces familiar to residents, created by arranging furnishings owned by the residents. Household actions such as cooking were photographed in all the facilities, not just in the group homes where cooking is part of the recommended routine.



Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Yokufukai Dementia Care Research and Training Centre Tokyo whose comments and suggestions were of inestimable value for my study. I am also indebted to Dr. Sato who gave me great supports and good collaborative works.

References

- Park, S. Ohara, K. and Sato, S. (2010) IMAGES OF WORKPLACE BY STAFFS TRAINED FOR THE UNIT-CARE –A study on the evaluation by staff in nursing home 1- , *Journal of Architecture and Planning* (Transactions of AIJ) , Vol. 75 (2010) , No. 647 pp.43-50
- Sato, S. and Ohara, K. (2007) A STUDY ON THE STAFF PARTICIPATION IN REPAIR PROCESS OF NURSING HOME , *AIJ Journal of Technology and Design*, Vol. 13 (2007), No. 25, pp.237-242A
- Sato, S. and Ohara, K. (2007) STUDY ON THE CONCEPT OF DAILY LIFE THOUGHT BY CAREWORKER IN NURSING CARE ENVIRONMENT - Photo-analysis of concept of 'home-like environment' and 'individuality' - , *Journal of Architecture and Planning* (Transactions of AIJ) , no. 616, pp. 47-54. June 2007
- Habraken, J. (1971)“You Can't Design the Ordinary.” *Architectural Design*, April 1971
- Chafetz , P K. and Namazi, K.(2000) Assisted Living: Current Issues in Facility Management and Resident Care, Praeger , 2000
- Association of Group home for the elderly with dementia in Japan (2004) “Tihouse koureisha group home no nitijo seikatsushien ni taisuru gainen no kochiku jigyo hokokusho ”, 2004.3
- Noda, M. (1988) “Hyohaku sareru kodomo tachi”, Joho Center