



Spain's Growing Elderly Population Face Problems

Spain's geriatric experts are worried over the burden that the country's growing aged population comprising 16% of its population will put on the national health services in years to come. Spain's aged population, with a life expectancy of over 78 years is the 5th largest in Europe, and grows by 3.7% each year. A report published in 2000 predicted that people over 65 years old will take up 77.4% of pharmaceutical spending and occupy up to 50% of hospital beds, as well as half of primary health care consultations. However, only one in four public hospitals in Spain offer geriatric care.

Recently, the government of Spain enacted a legislation that will give financial aid to family members who look after disabled and infirm relatives. The move, which was broadly welcomed by social workers and doctors, will benefit around 1.5 million people. More than 80% of those who look after elderly relatives are women. At present, only 6.5% of family members who look after disabled family members receive any help from the state. However, specialists in the geriatric care opined that while the new legislation is a step forward, there is a need for a new legal framework to regulate social health care, redistribute resources, and reorganize the present social and medical structures. They also believe that elderly people are best cared for at home, which has been a tradition in Spain. The realities of a changing family structure, though may not be able to sustain this model for health care of the elderly.

From an employment perspective, this development presents bright employment prospects for Filipino caregivers in the future. Presently, Spain is host to around 40,000 Filipinos, majority of whom are employed as household workers.

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