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## Dementia Day Care: Conceptual Analysis and Implementation Framework (Postprint)

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### Abstract

Dementia day care constitutes a vital component of the community-based care service system for older adults with dementia; however, its concept remains inconsistent, and its connotation and implementation framework have not been fully elucidated, significantly impacting the sustainable development and high-quality service delivery of dementia day care. This study employs Walker's classic concept analysis method to conduct a conceptual analysis of dementia day care, identifying five primary conceptual attributes: (1) daytime-intensive, non-residential care; (2) professional collaborative, family-centered integrated care for dementia; (3) public care through which dementia families access respite services; (4) an important supplement to high-quality dementia care; and (5) a facilitating force in dementia-friendly community development. The antecedents of dementia day care include the high care demands of individuals with dementia, weakening family functioning, and the dominant role of public care, while its outcomes involve impacts on individuals with dementia, family caregivers, and social welfare. This study further applies the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR), the Replicating Effective Programs framework (REP), and the RE-AIM evaluation framework from the field of implementation science to identify implementation factors, design implementation strategies, and evaluate implementation and outcomes of dementia day care, respectively. Future development of dementia day care should emphasize professionalism, high quality, integrated care, and the concept of dementia-friendly communities, with further improvements needed in service content, facilities, and implementation processes to enhance the quality of dementia care.

## Full Text

### Concept Analysis and Implementation Framework of Dementia Day Care Service

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#### Abstract

Day care service is an important component of the community care service system for elderly people with dementia. However, the concept of dementia day care has not been unified, and its connotation and implementation framework have not been clarified, which greatly affects the continuous construction and high-quality service supply of dementia day care service. The Walker classic concept analysis method was used and five attributes of the concept were introduced including: (1) daytime intensive, non-residential care; (2) professional coordination and integrated care focused on families with dementia; (3) public respite care support for families with dementia; (4) a crucial complement to high-quality care for dementia; and (5) a driving force in promoting a dementia-friendly community. The preconditions of dementia day care include high care needs, weakened family functions and the dominant role of public care, and the consequences involve dementia patients, family caregivers and social welfare. The implementation factors identification, implementation strategy design, implementation and effect evaluation were carried out respectively using the consolidated framework for implementation research, the replicating effective programs implementation framework and the RE-AIM evaluation framework in the field of implementation science. The specialization, high quality, integrated care, and the philosophy of the friendly community should be highlighted in the future development of dementia day care. The service content, facilities and implementation process need to be improved to promote the quality of dementia day care service.

**Keywords:** Dementia; Day care service; Concept analysis; Implementation science

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## Introduction

China is home to over 40 million disabled and cognitively impaired older adults [1], posing enormous challenges to the elderly care service system. As an important supplement to family caregiving, day care services have primarily been developed to meet the care needs of disabled older adults [2], with their role in the care system for disabled elderly gradually becoming clear. However, their function in addressing the care needs of older adults with dementia remains limited [3]. This study adopts the term “dementia” as a friendly alternative to the language of cognitive impairment [4]. Compared with disabled individuals and other chronic disease patients, people with dementia exhibit characteristics such as strong care dependency, substantial need for professional care, and prominent behavioral and psychological symptoms [5], resulting in heavier burdens for both family and public caregivers. Previous literature on dementia day care has primarily focused on exploratory aspects such as staffing configurations and funding strategies for day care institutions, but these studies have been largely descriptive and failed to reflect the contemporary shift in elderly care demands from basic subsistence to diversified needs [6-7]. The large population of people with dementia and their diverse unmet care needs urgently require new solutions. Guided by relevant theories from implementation science [8], this study employs concept analysis methods to propose an operational definition of dementia day care from a practical perspective, aiming to promote more accurate planning and delineation of care scope for dementia day care services and construct an implementation framework to guide practice with theoretical and evidence-based support, thereby providing a reference for the standardized operation of dementia day care.

### 1. Literature Search Strategy

A comprehensive search was conducted in Chinese databases (CNKI, Wanfang, and Chinese Biomedical Literature Database) and English databases (PubMed, Web of Science, and CINAHL) using a combination of subject headings and free-text terms. Chinese search terms included “cognitive impairment,” “dementia,” “Alzheimer’s disease,” “day care,” and “daytime care.” English search terms included “dementia,” “day care,” “day care services,” “day services,” and “day health care.” The search timeframe spanned from database inception to November 30, 2023. Inclusion criteria were: (1) studies focusing primarily on dementia day care; and (2) studies addressing at least one aspect of day care concepts, definitions, antecedents/consequences, or measurement tools. Exclusion criteria were: (1) unavailable full text; and (2) conference papers or duplicate publications. The search yielded 43 Chinese articles, with 24 selected after abstract screening, and 2,885 English articles, with 67 selected after abstract screening. Data extraction focused on descriptions of day care concepts and definitions. The Walker classic concept analysis method [9] was employed,

utilizing five steps according to the research purpose: (1) selecting a concept; (2) determining analysis objectives; (3) identifying concept usage and application; (4) determining defining attributes; and (5) identifying antecedents and consequences.

## 2.2 Conceptual Definition of Dementia Day Care

Foreign scholars first noted the application of adult day care institutions for Alzheimer's disease patients and their family caregivers in 1983, with the main service content being engaging Alzheimer's patients in meaningful activities to provide respite for family caregivers, with results showing lower costs compared to long-term institutional care [12]. Beginning in the 1990s, foreign countries started developing day care services specifically for dementia. In China, dementia day care centers have been piloted in Shanghai, Nanjing, and Guangzhou, but a clear definition of dementia day care has not yet been established [13-14]. The widely accepted definition of adult day care in China is that proposed by the National Adult Day Services Association: "a community-based group program that provides individualized care plans based on functional impairment, offering medical, social, and supportive services for less than 24 hours in a protective environment, enabling individuals to remain at home while providing respite opportunities for family caregivers" [15]. Drawing upon this definition of adult day care and focusing on the construction goals of dementia-friendly communities and existing dementia day care service content, this study defines dementia day care as: concentrated daytime care for community-dwelling older adults with dementia, providing integrated care services including cognitive training, behavioral and psychological symptom management, daily living care, and non-pharmacological interventions, while offering respite services for family caregivers to improve patient functional status, alleviate caregiver burden, and enhance quality of life for both patients and families.

## 3. Defining Attributes of Dementia Day Care

Defining attributes are the key characteristics consistently present when a concept exists and are the features most relevant to the concept [16]. Based on analysis of included literature, this study proposes five defining attributes of dementia day care.

**3.1 Daytime Intensive, Non-Residential Care** Dementia day care is a form of concentrated care and symptom management where service recipients receive care at a day care center during daytime hours. The service time is limited to daytime periods, with recipients returning home in the evening rather than residing at the facility.

**3.2 Professional Coordination and Family-Centered Integrated Care** Dementia day care serves both individuals with dementia and their families, aiming to meet the needs of families affected by dementia through multi-stakeholder

collaborative participation. In addition to basic daily living assistance such as meal support and bathing assistance, it provides professional integrated care services tailored to dementia families. Professional services embody a person-centered philosophy that respects the independent personality of individuals with dementia, offering personalized care including behavioral and psychological symptom management, non-pharmacological interventions, emergency response, cognitive training, and psychological counseling.

### **3.3 Public Care Providing Respite Services for Dementia Families**

Individuals with dementia exhibit high care dependency, placing a heavy burden on family caregivers. Dementia day care is a public care service led by the government that supports family caregivers in focusing on work or other life activities during daytime hours, providing social support to family caregivers, significantly reducing caregiver burden, and increasing their motivation to continue in the caregiving role.

**3.4 Crucial Complement to High-Quality Dementia Care** Family caregivers of individuals with dementia often assume caregiving roles without adequate capacity to provide dementia care. Dementia day care serves as an effective supplement and alternative to family caregiving, equipped with more professional personnel and facilities to meet the high-quality care needs of individuals with dementia.

### **3.5 Effective Force in Promoting Dementia-Friendly Communities**

Dementia-friendly communities [17] aim to promote greater social integration for individuals with dementia and their caregivers, ensuring dignity and quality of life for families affected by dementia. Dementia day care organizations conduct dignity-enhancing activities tailored to individuals with dementia, promote effective social participation, generate more social interaction and positive emotions, thereby improving patients' quality of life and representing an important component in the construction of dementia-friendly communities.

## **4. Analysis of Similar Concepts**

Dementia home care, memory clinics, and dementia day care collectively constitute a full-cycle care system for individuals with dementia, broadly falling within the scope of dementia-friendly community construction, yet possessing certain commonalities and differences in service stages, content, and venues that require clarification.

**4.1 Dementia Home Care** Dementia home care [18] emphasizes that older adults with dementia receive not only family care but also home-based services provided by the community. Its content includes daily living assistance provided by family caregivers or domestic workers, as well as medical services such as health monitoring and medication administration provided by professional

healthcare personnel at home. The main distinction between dementia home care and dementia day care lies in differences in service venue and content, with dementia day care serving as an important community support force for home-based dementia care.

**4.2 Memory Clinics** Memory clinics are specialized medical settings for assessing individuals with memory and cognitive impairments, representing a disease-specific management model primarily involving clinical consultation, cognitive assessment, laboratory tests, imaging examinations, and pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments. These clinics are typically established in tertiary, secondary, and community hospitals [19]. The primary difference from dementia day care is that memory clinics focus on identifying individuals with cognitive impairment and providing medical services, whereas dementia day care functions to address both daily care and specialized dementia care, though its target population is primarily limited to individuals with dementia rather than those with subjective memory decline or mild cognitive impairment (Table 1).

**Table 1 Distinguishment of Related Concepts to Dementia Day Care Services**

Item	Dementia Home Care	Dementia Day Care	Memory Clinic
Target Population	Older adults with dementia capable of or requiring home living	Individuals with dementia and their family caregivers	People with cognitive impairment
Service Time	Primarily daytime; determined by service recipient needs	Within 24 hours, maximum 48 hours	Daytime hours
Service Venue	Patient' s home	Community day care center	Secondary/tertiary hospitals and community health centers
Service Content	Informal care by domestic workers; some professional medical/nursing home visits	Clinical consultation, cognitive assessment, medical examinations and treatment	Daily living care, integrated specialized dementia care services
Service Provider	Community day care centers, private or non-profit organizations	Secondary/tertiary hospitals, private or public welfare organizations	Public-private, public-private partnership, private

Item	Dementia Home Care	Dementia Day Care	Memory Clinic
Service Objective	Maintain physical function and independence, manage behavioral/psychological symptoms	Standardize diagnosis/treatment processes; actively treat to delay disease progression	Improve quality of life and functional status, alleviate caregiver burden

## 5. Identification of Antecedents

Antecedents refer to necessary conditions that occur before or lead to the concept. This study identifies antecedents of dementia day care from individual, family, community, and societal levels, 归纳为 three aspects: high care needs of individuals with dementia, weakened family function, and the dominant role of public care.

**5.1 High Care Needs of Individuals with Dementia** First, individuals with dementia have diverse needs regarding dignity, behavioral and psychological symptom management, and non-pharmacological management [20]. Second, individuals with dementia exhibit strong care dependency. Third, family caregivers assume multiple social roles and cannot respond to the round-the-clock care needs of individuals with dementia.

**5.2 Weakened Family Function** First, family caregivers' care capacity does not match dementia care needs, making it difficult to meet the medical service demands of individuals with dementia. Second, changing family structures resulting from declining birth rates have altered traditional caregiving capacities.

**5.3 Dominant Role of Public Care** First, under government leadership, there is emphasis on the coverage of basic elderly care services and the attainment of people' s well-being. Second, national elderly care service planning focuses on creating a friendly social environment for older adults with dementia.

## 7.1 Identification of Implementation Factors for Dementia Day Care

As an important community-based medical-nursing integration project in dementia care and elderly services, the purpose of concept analysis and elaboration is to better promote project implementation and quality improvement, aligning with national policies and concepts for friendly community creation. However, dementia day care is a complex intervention crossing multiple service organizations, involving multiple stakeholders, and operating within a complex interconnected system environment. Applying relevant frameworks from implementation science to assess contextual factors holds significant value and

promotional effect. Based on concept analysis of dementia day care and the friendly community construction framework, this section utilizes the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) [26] in the field of implementation science to systematically examine implementation factors from five dimensions: essential characteristics of dementia day care, external environment, internal conditions, stakeholder characteristics, and implementation process, thereby optimizing implementation planning for dementia day care services.

**7.1.1 Essential Characteristics of Dementia Day Care** Building upon the defining attributes of dementia day care described above, implementation factors are identified based on characteristics including professional coordination, person-centeredness, respite services, high-quality care, and promotion of friendly communities. The person-centered characteristic as a determinant for implementation aligns with the friendly community philosophy and meets people's aspirations for a better life. Professional coordination and high-quality care as determinants require service content to include personalized care such as cognitive training and behavioral/psychological symptom management. Current obstacles include insufficient stimulation of high-quality care demand, limited professional dementia care capacity, and reluctance of most day care centers to accept older adults with dementia.

**7.1.2 External Environment** The external environment includes the growing number of individuals with dementia and increasing care burden that drive demand. During the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, the state emphasizes expanding community-based basic elderly care services. Currently, dementia day care model development involves multiple stakeholders including government, social organizations, dementia day care centers, and elderly care industry markets, yet mutual assistance and collaboration among these entities remain inadequate. Government support policies for dementia day care, regulatory systems, public health resource allocation, and funding support are all incomplete.

**7.1.3 Internal Conditions** Internal conditions for dementia day care development include development orientation, service recipient needs, and provider capacity. The objectives of dementia day care follow the dementia-friendly community philosophy and align with national elderly care service system construction directions. Obstacles include lack of dignity education in communities, limited awareness or restricted access to external care support resources among family caregivers, insufficient professional capacity of service providers, and limited cognitive training and rehabilitation facilities.

**7.1.4 Stakeholder Characteristics** Stakeholders in dementia day care include individuals with dementia, family caregivers, and society. Individuals with dementia can maintain and improve cognitive and physical function and

enhance quality of life. Family caregivers experience reduced burden and increased motivation to continue caregiving roles. Delayed institutionalization and reduced emergency admissions for individuals with dementia promote rational utilization of community healthcare resources. However, constraints from traditional concepts such as filial piety culture and fear among individuals with dementia of being abandoned by family result in low utilization of dementia day care services.

**7.1.5 Implementation Process** Implementation of dementia day care services requires a positive change process, including developing implementation plans in advance, attracting participation from other organizations or personnel through publicity and demonstration of best practices, and completing implementation according to predetermined plans. Current issues include non-standardized service processes [27], insufficient and single-source funding [28], inadequate publicity and low public recognition, and low talent attraction to dementia day care centers.

## 7.2 Design of Implementation Strategies

The implementation factors identified earlier encompass service content, personnel, facilities, policies, and philosophy. Building upon these factors, this section employs the Replicating Effective Programs (REP) framework [29] from implementation science to design implementation strategies across three phases: pre-implementation preparation, implementation, and quality control.

**7.2.1 Pre-Implementation Preparation** This phase requires establishing a dementia day care construction task force, piloting implementation plans, adjusting implementation strategies, and ensuring preparatory work. Task force members can be recruited from dementia family caregivers, institutional service providers, medical personnel, community organizers, and industry stakeholders to provide multi-level input for implementation strategy development. For example, medical personnel can guide improvements in professional medical measures. After developing implementation strategies, randomly selected communities should pilot the program to analyze obstacles in actual implementation, followed by continued adjustment and optimization until the task force approves the plan. Implementation strategies developed during the pre-implementation phase should be printed as booklets or electronic resource packages for distribution during the implementation phase.

**7.2.3 Quality Control** This implementation strategy design is based on implementation factors and, guided by the REP framework, details the work content of each organization during pre-implementation and implementation phases. Quality control is achieved through implementation process construction and process-outcome feedback to address problems exposed in current dementia day care centers.

### 7.3 Application of Implementation Strategies

Application of dementia day care implementation strategies includes pre-implementation assessment, execution according to established strategies, dual evaluation of process and outcomes, and feedback and improvement. First, because dementia day care faces different implementation determinants (facilitators and barriers) across various regional and environmental contexts, implementation strategies should be customized based on pre-implementation assessment results. The strategy design phase provides evidence-based solutions for assessment findings. Process and outcome evaluation of implementation strategies employs the rigorous RE-AIM framework [30]. Process evaluation constructs indicator systems from five dimensions: effectiveness, reach, adoption, implementation, and maintenance, considering factors such as patient participation rates and coverage, government support levels, enthusiasm of professional medical staff, return on investment for enterprises and welfare organizations, and implementation of professional care service content. Outcome evaluation uses the effectiveness dimension of the RE-AIM framework, focusing on service recipients and social public resources, using cognitive function assessment scales (commonly MoCA or MMSE), quality of life scales, family burden scales, and institutionalization timing and emergency admission frequency to evaluate effectiveness. Finally, continuous feedback and evaluation can be conducted based on RE-AIM framework assessment content during and after implementation.

## 8. Summary and Outlook

Through concept analysis and implementation framework construction, this study finds that dementia day care tends to develop toward an integrated service model serving high-quality care for community-dwelling dementia patients, providing specialized dementia care and respite services for family caregivers. Currently, domestic day care centers primarily focus on care for disabled older adults, lacking project service guidelines, service items, and assessment and admission mechanisms appropriate for the domestic dementia day care context. Environmental design and cultural construction also require further consideration. Implementation science frameworks provide practical references for program implementation. This study used implementation science frameworks to identify determinants in the dementia day care implementation process, designed implementation strategies, and developed application pathways for these strategies, which warrant further empirical exploration and optimization.

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