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Daycare Centers for the Elderly – Patterns of Utilization, Contributions and Programmatic Directions

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Malka Korazim ♦ Jenny Brodsky

The study was conducted with JDC-Eshel – The Association
for the Planning and Development of Services for the Aged in
Israel – and funded with its assistance



RESEARCH REPORT

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Executive Summary

Background and Goals

Daycare centers are one of the central services for elderly with disabilities in the community. The service was developed about 30 years ago, according to the 'social model'. It is offered in the morning hours on a group basis and provides socio-cultural activities, personal-care services, meals, and professional therapeutic services – all under one roof.

Daycare centers are part of the basket of services offered to elders eligible under the Community Long-term Care Insurance (CLTCI) Law. Beneficiaries choose their service/s from a basket that includes – apart from daycare centers – homecare (personal care and home-making), a 24-hour-a-day emergency call service and laundry services. Elders whose disabilities do not meet the threshold criteria of the CLTCI Law may receive the service through the financing of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services (MSASS), on the basis of a means test.

The Brookdale Institute has assisted in the development and implementation of the centers from the outset and conducted a comprehensive census and survey during the 1990s, resulting in the introduction of significant changes to the service.

Since the mid-1990s, the service has developed at an accelerated pace, based on the conception that the centers can offer an important response to the social needs of elders with disabilities, and relieve the burden on their families. However, in practice, some 10% of the elders with disabilities attend daycare. A central question is whether the level of use of the centers reflects the demand and the interest on the part of the elderly or if it reflects a lack of knowledge, negative image of the service or other barriers connected to the manner of operation of the centers. In addition, issues were raised connected to the patterns of utilization of the centers and the satisfaction with them.

In light of these questions, Eshel's Committee for Community Services launched comprehensive discussion to examine new ways of promoting the service. Similar discussions were held at a committee of the National Insurance Institute (NII) specially established for the purpose. The discussions, with the participation of representatives of the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, revealed a lack of comprehensive, reliable data on the demand for daycare centers and the interest of elders in the service. They also revealed a lack of basic, systematic and updated data on the characteristics of the centers and the clientele, such as: occupancy, supply of services, number of elders registered, number actually attending, the profile of the clientele, their patterns of behavior, their utilization of daycare center services, and the adaptation of physical aspects to the needs of elders. The only data available had been collected by Brookdale in a census in 1994. A decision was thus taken that Brookdale conduct a comprehensive study of daycare centers to provide updated, wide-ranging data to serve policymakers in the future development of the service.

Study Design

To provide a full picture of daycare centers, the study rested on three components: a census, a survey of elder attendees who are beneficiaries of long-term care benefits and their offspring (their main informal caregivers)); and a survey of non-attendee beneficiaries and their offspring.

1. Census

All the centers were mapped for data on their patterns of activity and elder attendees. The data were twofold: (a) on the centers in general, such as hours of activity, services offered, staff characteristics and physical aspects. These data were collected from self-completion questionnaires administered to the directors of daycare centers (the Director's Questionnaire); (b) on the attendees: their demographic, health and functional characteristics, the regularity of their attendance and their patterns of utilization of the centers. For these purposes, the center staff filled in questionnaires on each elder attending daycare (the Attendee Questionnaire). In total, general data (the days of activity and number of attendees) were obtained from all daycare centers (172 centers); data on activities, services and staff were obtained from 87% of the centers (149); data on the elder attendees were obtained from 75% of the centers (129).

2. Survey of Beneficiaries (and their Offspring) of the CLTCI Benefits who Attend Daycare Centers

Interviews were conducted with elder attendees of daycare centers receiving benefits under the CLTCI Law, as well as with one of their offspring (hereafter: their caregiver) since they are also involved in the decision of daycare attendance and the centers are meant to contribute to their wellbeing. The study population was sampled from beneficiaries of the CLTCI Law, in nine localities countrywide, representative in terms of size and type. The study examined the patterns of participation of the elders in daycare activities, their satisfaction with the centers, the contribution of the centers to them, and their interest in changing their patterns of utilization. Data were collected on 111 attendees and 63 caregivers.

3. Survey of Beneficiaries (and their Offspring) of the CLTCI Law Who Do Not Attend Daycare Centers

Since one of the major topics of the study was the extent of utilization of daycare centers by the target population, we also conducted a survey on a sample of beneficiaries of the CLTCI Law who do not attend daycare centers and with one of their offspring (hereafter: their caregiver). As in the case of attendees, here too the sample was drawn from nine localities countrywide. Data were collected on the extent to which the elders and their caregivers were aware of the service, their perception of the service, their interest in it, and the barriers to their attendance. In total, data were collected on 330 elders and 218 caregivers.

The main findings on major issues of concern to service developers and policymakers are presented below. The report presents an extensive description of the findings from each of the data sources separately.

Findings

1. Current Utilization of Daycare Centers

The census data showed that:

- ◆ In 2008, Israel had 172 daycare centers for the elderly, attended by some 15,500 elders. A comparison of this with a previous census reveals that from 1994 to 2008, 53 daycare centers were added – an increase of 45% (from 119 to 172) and the number of attendees grew from 7,400 in 1994 to 15,500 in 2008 – an increase of 108%. The rate of growth of Israel's elderly population (aged 65+) in this period was lower; the rate of utilization of the service thus increased from 1.4% of the elderly in 1994 to 2.2% in 2008.
- ◆ About a third of all daycare centers were found to have a department for the mentally frail (elderly with dementia); about a tenth were aimed exclusively at the mentally frail (relatively small centers).
- ◆ The average daily occupancy in 2008 was 51 attendees. The daily rate of occupancy (occupancy in relation to capacity) was 73%. Compared with 1994, daily utilization had increased in terms of occupancy (then, 62%). The study revealed that occupancy was relatively low in centers operating in regional councils (as opposed to municipalities), in the periphery, and at relatively small centers.
- ◆ In the assessment of daycare center directors, 41% of the centers showed an increase in the number of attendees in the past year; 23% showed a decrease (the rest showed no change). The main reasons cited for the increase were marketing, publicity and the provision of information; a center's positive image; the expansion and diversification of activities; the expansion and renovations of the physical premises. Directors noting a decrease cited the increase in the employment of foreign workers living with the elderly; the high cost of a client's share of the payment, and the reduction of quotas provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services.
- ◆ Nearly two-thirds of the daycare centers offered at least one additional activity on the premises, aimed almost exclusively at elders (not necessarily daycare attendees). These were mainly leisure activities, such as gym classes, hobby groups, lectures etc. At a third of the centers, the activities were concurrent with daycare hours; at 57% of the centers, there were also afternoon and evening activities. This arrangement was far more common at large centers than small ones.

2. Characteristics of Elders Attending Daycare Centers

The findings of the mapping show that:

- ◆ In socio-demographic terms, the population attending daycare centers differs from Israel's general population of elders:
 - About half are over 80 (vs. 27% of the general population of elders)
 - 44% live alone (vs. 25% of the general population of elders)
 - 70% are women (vs. 57% of the general population of elders)

- 69% are unmarried (vs. 44% of the general population of elders)
- 67% have partial education – up to nine years (vs. 37% of the general population of elders)
- ◆ In terms of functioning, it was found that most of the elders attending daycare (77%) suffer from at least one problem of daily functioning: physical limitations, mobility difficulties, problems of orientation or dementia (34% have slight disabilities; 43% have serious disabilities), and 23% have no disabilities.
- ◆ The NII, through its CLTCI Law benefits, funds 62% of the daycare attendees; the MSASS funds about a quarter (26%), and 14% fund their own attendance (2% of which are funded by a combination of CLTCI Law benefits and privately)). As expected, the level of disability was linked to the source of funding: elders receiving funding through CLTCI Law benefits have a higher level of disability than attendees funded by MSASS. Private funding is most common among the mentally frail.
- ◆ A comparison of the characteristics of attendees in 1994 and 2008 showed that:
 - Attendees in 2008 were older than attendees in 1994
 - While there was no change in the proportion of attendees with disabilities, there was a considerable increase in the relative proportion of attendees with severe disabilities. The percentage eligible for the highest levels of benefits under the CLTCI Law among all daycare attendees doubled in the period under review: from 11% to 22%. Thus, the centers today deal with a population that is more disabled than in the past. With respect to the mentally frail, it was found that 16% of the attendees were so defined in both censuses.
 - The rate of attendees funded under the CLTCI Law rose from 53% in 1994 to 62% in 2008.

3. Attendees and Offspring/Caregivers – Their Satisfaction and Perceived Contribution of the Service

The findings from the interviews with attendees and their caregivers showed that:

- ◆ Attendees and caregivers perceived daycare as an important service and were very satisfied with it (73%, very satisfied; 27%, satisfied).
- ◆ Almost all attendees (96%) noted that they participated in the center for company and the activities; only a quarter noted that they come to receive treatment for medical problems.
- ◆ Almost all the attendees and caregivers perceived the center as relieving loneliness and supplying interest, meaningful activity and company.
- ◆ As regards health maintenance, it was found that more caregivers than elders (83% and 64% respectively) believed that the centers kept the elders healthy.
- ◆ With respect to relieving the burden on the family – a high percentage of caregivers confirmed that the centers made life easier for them (84% versus 61% of elders).

- ◆ About a quarter of the attendees were interested in increasing the frequency of their weekly participation. About half of the caregivers were interested in greater frequency. Furthermore, half the caregivers were prepared to pay privately for increased participation.
- ◆ Thirteen percent of the attendees and about a quarter of the caregivers were interested in changing the format of attendance for a more flexible basket of services.

4. Non-Attendees and Caregivers – Their Perceptions of, and Interest in, Daycare Centers

As mentioned, daycare centers are offered as a service under benefits of the CLTCI. Most beneficiaries, however, opt for a homecare worker from the basket of services; only 7% in 2008 chose to attend a daycare center. Interviews with elders eligible under the law who do not attend daycare, and with their caregivers, revealed that:

- ◆ Most non-attendees were aware of the existence of daycare centers (68%)
- ◆ About half of the non-attendees believed the daycare centers to be attractive and well-maintained to a great extent, 40% believed that they offered interesting activities, and about a third believed that it is pleasant to spend time there (38%). With respect to the roles (or functions) of daycare centers – it was found that more than half of the non-attendees thought that daycare might ease their loneliness (60%), provide interest (56%), lessen boredom (56%) to a very great or great extent. Here, too, a relatively high rate – about a fifth of the elders – were unable to assess the contribution of daycare. A quarter of the elders believed that daycare could relieve the burden on the family.
- ◆ Sixteen percent of the non-attendees expressed an interest in attending daycare under current conditions, that is, to exchange homecare hours for daycare participation (7% of them said they would like to do so whereas 9% said they would perhaps be prepared to do so). A higher rate of caregivers (37%) voiced interest in such an exchange.
- ◆ Twenty-eight percent of the non-attendees expressed interest in daycare if the service were free or did not require an exchange of homecare hours. Here, too, a higher rate of elder caregivers (58%) were interested in their relatives attending.
- ◆ Elders expressing interest in daycare were in relatively better health/functional condition (younger, more independent, with a more positive assessment of their state of health), than uninterested elders. However, their social situation was poorer: a relatively large proportion lived alone, and they expressed more feelings of loneliness and depression.
- ◆ The study revealed a number of barriers to attending daycare centers among those interested in doing so :
 - A considerable proportion (60%) were unaware of the existence of daycare centers, and 78% said they did not know how to go about joining.
 - Thirty-six percent reported that it would be difficult for them to be ready for the morning transportation service.
 - Almost all (98%) reported that they found it difficult to spend time in the company of elders with a higher level of disability than their own;

- More than half noted an interest in attending daycare for a few hours, for activities of interest to them, though not for a whole day (in other words, they were interested in a flexible basket of services). About a third also noted that they preferred to arrive at daycare at a later hour than the current practice, i.e. between 10:00 and 12:00 a.m., and about a tenth said they would prefer afternoon activities.

5. Desirable and Actual Daycare Services

Daycare centers currently provide attendees with a structured basket of services. These are the main findings on the current supply of services and the wishes of center directors, attendees and non-attendees:

◆ Meals

Almost all centers provided breakfast and lunch, and almost all attendees took these meals there (92% and 90% respectively).

- Most attendees believed the service of breakfast and lunch to be important or very important (89% and 99% respectively).
- Half of the non-attendees interested in daycare responded that they would be interested in receiving a meal at the center; three-quarters of the caregivers interested in daycare said that they would like the elders to receive meals there.

◆ Transportation Service

A transportation service was offered by all daycare centers and almost all attendees (89%) availed themselves of it.

- Most attendees (88%) said that they would be unable to get to daycare without the service.
- Most non-attendees were interested in the service (77%) and most caregivers said they would like the elders to use the service if they attended daycare.

◆ Bathing

All daycare centers offered a bathing service. Fifteen percent of the attendees used the service, with higher percentages among the following groups: the Arab sector (31%), the mentally frail (23%), and beneficiaries of long-term care benefits (17%); about a quarter (23%) of those with bathing limitations used the service.

- There were hardly any attendees who would have liked to use the service and did not do so (4%).
- A tenth of the non-attendees interested in daycare were also interested in the service, as were a quarter of their caregivers.

◆ **Laundry Service**

Some two-thirds of the daycare centers offered a laundry service. Only 1 percent of the attendees said that they used the service. However, the daycare centers use a laundry service for their own needs (tablecloths, sheets etc.).

- A small percentage (4%) of attendees currently not using the service would be interested in so doing.

◆ **Personal Grooming Service**

Hairdressing

Most daycare centers (82%) offered a hairdressing service. About a quarter of the attendees availed themselves of it.

- About a tenth of the attendees would like to use the service and do not currently do so.
- Less than half of the non-attendees interested in daycare would like to use the service if they attended versus three-quarters of the caregivers who considered it a desirable service.

Pedicure

Most daycare centers (87%) offered a pedicure, manicure and/or chiropody service. Less than a fifth of the attendees used these services.

◆ **Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy**

About half of the daycare centers offered physiotherapy and occupational therapy to a limited extent (e.g., the average number of a physiotherapist's weekly hours was 8.5). About half the attendees received at least one of these services.

- Most attendees (79%), non-attendees (71%), and caregivers (96%) believed it important that the services be offered at daycare centers.

◆ **Nursing Service**

Most daycare centers had a nurse on hand (83%). On the average, the nurse was present for 11 hours a week.

- Most of the attendees (79%), non-attendees (65%), and directors (85%) considered the service important.

◆ **Social Work Service**

All daycare centers offered a social work service. The post of social worker was found at 88% of the centers, and the social worker worked an average of 20 hours a week. Of the directors – 13% served also as the facility's social worker.

Due to the central place of leisure activities at daycare facilities and in the lives of the elderly, a separate chapter was devoted to the topic.

6. Leisure Activities in and out of Daycare Centers

The largest variety of activities offered by daycare centers were services of leisure, socializing and culture. Prominent activities offered at the centers were gym classes (almost all); arts and crafts (at 80%); current events (74%); table games (59%), and the Weekly Torah Portion (44%).

Most attendees (78%) participated in gym classes in the half year before the survey, about half attended lectures, and arts and crafts; smaller percentages cited participation in table games (39%) or computer use (13%). Moreover, most of these activities took place at the daycare centers. The centers thus appear to provide a response in leisure and social areas.

A relatively low rate of attendees (15%-18%) expressed a desire for leisure activities in which they did not currently participate. This was further reinforcement that the centers meet the leisure needs of attendees.

More than half (59%) of the non-attendees participated in active leisure activities of some sort (mainly gym, going to cafes, and playing table games), while 41% participated only in passive activities (mainly watching television).

Nevertheless, the data showed that most non-attendees expressed an interest in participating in active leisure activities. Beyond the quarter who were prepared to participate in daycare activity if financial barriers were removed – about half did participate or would like to participate in activities of interest to them, within a social framework (such as a community center or daycare center).

The main activities in which non-attendees reported that they would like to participate (and do not currently do so) were gym, concerts or films (about a third); lectures and studies, arts and crafts, and table games (about a quarter).

The main impediment to participation in active activities was health/functional state (81%). Nonetheless, other factors were cited, such as a failure to find a suitable framework, a lack of suitable company or problems of access (about a quarter cited these barriers).

Issues for Discussion for the Development of Daycare Centers for the Elderly

The study findings contain important input for examining several main issues in the development of daycare centers in the future.

◆ How to Increase the Extent of Utilization of Daycare Centers?

The findings showed that alongside the increase over the past decade in the occupancy of daycare centers, some centers (about a third) had a low occupancy (less than 70%) and a capacity to absorb additional elders. Seven percent of the non-attendees were prepared to join centers under current conditions. This alone would expand the utilization of daycare centers by 8,500 elders, eligible under the Long-Term Care Insurance Law (out of 122,000 eligible elders

who did not attend daycare in 2008). This figure would more than fill the 5,700 available places at daycare centers today.

Programmatic Directions Emerging from the Findings to Expand the Utilization of Daycare Centers:

- Publicizing daycare centers among elders and their caregivers – it was found that a considerable portion of elders who would be interested in attending daycare were currently unaware of the existence of the centers and did not know how to go about utilizing the service. Clearly, information on, and marketing of, the centers should be improved, especially among “younger elders” and those with a lower level of disability since they are the ones who expressed greater interest in the service than the older, more disabled elders. An additional target population of marketing is the in-between generation who support the elders. They expressed considerable interest in the service; some were even prepared to pay for it privately.
- Developing a flexible basket of services for elders searching for a suitable framework for leisure activities – developing models that may promote the service and increase occupancy by offering responses to elders who expressed interest in attending for an hour or two, and only activities of interest to them. A fairly large proportion of directors are prepared to make this change.
- Examining ways to respond to attendees wishing to participate with greater frequency – the findings showed that about a quarter of the attendees and half of their caregivers would like to increase the frequency of participation. Identifying this population at the daycare centers and examining the barriers to greater attendance may also help utilize the centers more optimally.
- Utilizing the center premises for afternoon activities – today, two-thirds of the centers offer additional activities to daycare – whether during daycare hours or in the afternoon – in most of which, the elder attendees too may participate. Steps should be taken to continue to expand this service as it may promote better utilization of the premises and help balance budgets.

◆ How to Prepare for the Needs of the Target Populations?

The findings showed that, on the one hand, a considerable portion of attendees suffered from severe levels of disability and, on the other, elders interested in attending daycare were primarily those with lower levels of disability. The needs of the two populations should be examined along with the required responses to facilitate their integration into daycare or the utilization of the centers to meet their needs.

The Desirable Basket of Services at Daycare Centers and Responding to the Needs of Non-Attendees

- Alongside the concept of the centers as a social framework, the population was very interested in therapeutic services, especially in physiotherapy, occupational therapy and nursing services. It is important to continue examining the expectations of elders of these services and their place in the basket of services of daycare centers.

- Leisure activities are one of the emphases of the centers. In light of the interest of non-attendees in leisure activities, ways should be examined to utilize the centers to respond to the range of interested populations. One way to do this is to allow participants to take part in specific activities of their choice – in other words, a more flexible basket of service consumption.
- The study revealed that most non-attendees were not interested in participation in the future but would be interested in expanding their leisure activities, whether or not in a social framework. It is worthwhile developing additional models to respond to the needs of elders with disabilities living in the community who do not attend daycare centers. Some possible solutions beyond the abovementioned development of a more flexible basket of services are making clubs accessible to elders with disabilities and developing leisure activities at the homes of elders or in small groups, e.g. with the help of volunteers.

Preparing Daycare Centers to Respond to the Needs of the Mentally Frail

Daycare centers are virtually the only response for mentally-frail elders living in the community. They offer elders occupation and activities, and their families – a respite. A third of the centers are aimed exclusively at the mentally frail or have a separate wing for this population.

- Developing additional wings or special daycare centers for the mentally frail may help both elders living in the community who do not currently utilize daycare services and elders who do attend daycare but suffer from cognitive deterioration.
- It is worth considering the development of specific daycare centers for the mentally frail, such as centers that would operate in the evening and at night.

The study findings were discussed by Eshel's Committee of Community Services and at meetings with center directors and community professionals, and constituted important input into the thinking to improve the response offered by the centers to the target population. In addition, in wake of the study, a special professional committee was established to examine the findings and their implications for developing daycare centers. As part of the committee's work, pioneer programs are being tested today at several centers, based on the programmatic directions emerging from the study.

The study was conducted in partnership with Eshel and funded by it.

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