The op-ed on the issue exists to build an aging community

Author

Institutional Affiliations

Author Note

The op-ed on the issue exists to build an aging community

The old age population is growing rapidly in Untied States but little is being done to accept them or assign them a suitable role in this social order. The issue of aging is related with several social, political, economic and cultural values. The disparity in the provision of care and services also differs among gender, race and class.

The population of United States is aging at immense rate. By the year 2030, one out of every five individuals in the United States would be aged 65 or older. By the year 2035, the total number of individuals older than 65 will exceed than the number of children who would be under 18 years (AARP, 2019).

The national and international concern to build age friendly communities has become a grave issue. Various programs and initiatives have been taken in the past to ensure a stable and refined system for the elderly in our society. However, there are many challenges associated with the formulation and implementation of the age friendly goals.

The public policy and several other initiatives for the older population have primarily focused on the delivery of safety, healthcare, financial assistance and other benefits. Over the past few decades, the age friendly community initiatives (AFCIs) have provided a significant importance to the matter

American society has long disregarded the concept of filial piety and the importance of having elders around. The public and social policies have been molded such that our culture has built a continuum of placing older people in institutional care. The recent challenge for the American policy makers is to establish age friendly communities.

The concept of ‘Great Society’ by President Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s laid the foundation of a federal program for providing health and other social services to the older community along with Medicaid, Medicare, and Older Americans Act (OAA). Many amendments have been made in this legislation to the date according to the changing needs of the citizens.

Age-friendly Community Initiatives (AFCIs) have an upstream goal to concentrate on the whole community. Its primary objective is to bring about change in the elderly people’s overall physical and social setting in order to improve their ability to function efficiently within their homes and communities. It also fulfils the requirements of White House Conference on aging 2015.

AFCIs involve the participation of municipal governments, local and private service providers, religious organizations, transportation and housing suppliers and citizens themselves. Their goal is to work for the health and wellbeing of older adults and their active engagement in the community by providing them with meaningful roles. The community planning, support focused and cross sector partnerships approaches of the AFCIs include the collaboration of community services, multiple organizations and stakeholders (Greenfield, Oberlink, Scharlach, Neal, & Stafford, 2015).

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Network of Age Friendly States and Communities have been working to raise awareness among locals and elected officials. They encourage leaders of different local organizations for implementation of programs for making communities livable for older adults by providing resources and conducting research studies.

The programs that are needed to be considered for age friendly communities include outdoor spaces, community buildings, mobility, residence, social activation, civic engagement, respect and social values, and communication and information.

The age friendly cities project was launched by World Health organization in 2006 in order to provide safe and healthier environment for the elderly. By 2016, 332 cities and communities in 36 countries including 123 American communities had become the part of that network (Filinson, Raimondo, & Maigret, 2016). A number of states in America have started using the model for providing old are care to its citizens by introducing new programs in response to increased urbanization and aging policies.

Baby boomers have reached to the old age and require adequate facilities thus, it is imperative to initiate programs to build cities for all ages. The livable cities where they can receive all the care and services can let them participate in the society like rest of the citizens.

A City for All project will attract people of all ages and it can be achieved by expanding the horizon of senior housing options. Such cities should be able to match the requirements of all stages of life. Many such initiatives have been taken by Human Investment Project, Senior Housing Solutions, Burbank Senior Artists Colony, Senior Co-Housing and Green House Homes (Kennedy, 2010).

Age Friendly Oxford Initiative has also been working with the affiliation of World Health Organization and AARP. The combined efforts have led to the approval of the City of Oxford in Ohio to fulfil the commitment of the age friendly communities. It comprises of all the facilities to accommodate all kinds of age groups (Roy et al., 2019).

Oxford City Project has primarily focused on the housing as the top priority followed by transportation, health, education, employment, volunteering and communication. Most of the individuals have reported that despite a few challenges, such cities provide a good housing place to grow old (Dhakal, Kunkel, Young, & Kessler, 2019).

Numerous qualitative, quantitative and literatures reviews have been published so far in order to analyze the progress of building such a healthy and friendly environment along with the response of the elderly people and their families. There is also a gap in delivering the right and adequate information to the general public about the focus of social workers and political policy makers towards the issue.

**References**

AARP. (2019). *AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities*. AARP.org/Livable.

Dhakal, U., Kunkel, S. R., Young, M. A., & Kessler, V. (2019). *Age-Friendly Oxford Community Needs Assessment: Report to the Age-Friendly Oxford Leadership Advisory Group*.

Filinson, R., Raimondo, M., & Maigret, M. (2016). *Building age-friendly community: Notes from the field*.

Greenfield, E. A., Oberlink, M., Scharlach, A. E., Neal, M. B., & Stafford, P. B. (2015). Age-friendly community initiatives: Conceptual issues and key questions. *The Gerontologist*, *55*(2), 191–198.

Kennedy, C. (2010). The City of 2050—An Age-Friendly, Vibrant, Intergenerational Community. *Generations*, *34*(3), 70–75.

Roy, S., Baker, C., Hall, B., Pryor, T., Heath, S., Vaswani, S., … de Medeiros, K. (2019). *Age-Friendly Oxford: A Qualitative Study Conducted by the Miami First Year Research Experience (FYRE) Class of 2017-2018*.