



## Newsclipping

Date: 23rd March, 2020 (Monday)

Source: South China Morning Post – A7

Re: Coronavirus: online day care keeping elderly Hongkongers active during home isolation

Ref: [Please click here](#)


South China Morning Post News Comment Lifestyle More +

Hong Kong / Society

### Coronavirus: online day care keeping elderly Hongkongers active during home isolation

- Christian Family Service Centre using video to help elderly with mild and moderate dementia regain physical and mental abilities
- Some of those stuck indoors during pandemic have seen their conditions deteriorate

Victor Ting  
Published: 10:44am, 23 Mar, 2020



An elderly man sits on a cardboard box on a street in Sham Shui Po. Photo: Xiaomei Chen


Every week, Shun Wo looked forward to the few hours she could spend at a day care centre, exercising, playing cards, or just hanging out with her friends and the staff.

But the coronavirus pandemic put a stop to all that and has confined the 80-year-old Hongkonger to her home.

As local Covid-19 infections surpassed 300, the elderly woman, who suffers from mild dementia, has experienced a deterioration in her cognitive abilities after being stuck indoors for more than a month.

This has left her daughter, who did not want to be named, with something of a dilemma.

"Things need to be repeated more than once for her to understand now," she said. "Everyone wants life back to normal ... But safety has to come first, as the elderly are highly vulnerable to the coronavirus."



Tong Choi-ying, programme director (left), and social workers Chan Hiu-iam (centre) and Chan Ka-po at the Christian Family Service Centre in Kowloon Bay on a video call with the Chan family. Photo: Jonathan Wong

About a week ago, an online day care service offering remote activities with fellow senior citizens and counsellors, via a video link, appeared to have solved the problem for Shun Wo, at least to a certain extent.

"She smiled again and was quite happy," her daughter said.

Christian Family Service Centre (CFSC) was among the first NGOs in the city to go online to help the elderly at its day care facilities beat the blues during the crisis.

Participants get a weekly package delivered to their home and use its contents for activities ranging from cognitive training, such as putting date and weather stickers on a board, to simple arts and crafts.

"There are elements that stimulate the brain, as well as interactive activities that help old people retain their cognitive abilities, memory and self-management skills," said Stephenie Man Tsz-ying, an occupational therapist at CFSC who helped design the programme.

One example, she said, was making paper soap, an activity that reminded the elderly of their childhood and the need to wash their hands.

Hong Kong has some 1.3 million people aged 65 and above, according to official figures. The non-governmental organisation, along with most of the 79 day care centres for the elderly in the city, has offered only limited services since February 4, after the government shut schools and government amenities to contain the spread of the virus.

Tong Choi-ying, CFSC's programme director for elder care, said just a month or so without nursing care, rehabilitation, recreational and other support services could mean "significant changes" in the conditions of old people with mild to moderate dementia.

"Some elderly who have learned how to use the toilet have to rely on diapers again. And some begin to mistake their family members for others, or forget their names altogether," Tong said. "Our care workers are very frustrated that some hard-won improvements in some elderly after their training have been lost and reversed."





- Christian Family Service Centre using video to help elderly with mild and moderate dementia regain physical and mental abilities
- Some of those stuck indoors during pandemic have seen their conditions deteriorate

Every week, Shun Wo looked forward to the few hours she could spend at a day care centre, exercising, playing cards, or just hanging out with her friends and the staff.

But the coronavirus pandemic put a stop to all that and has confined the 80-year-old Hongkonger to her home.

As local Covid-19 infections surpassed 300, the elderly woman, who suffers from mild dementia, has experienced a deterioration in her cognitive abilities after being stuck indoors for more than a month.

This has left her daughter, who did not want to be named, with something of a dilemma.

“Things need to be repeated more than once for her to understand now,” she said. “Everyone wants life back to normal ... But safety has to come first, as the elderly are highly vulnerable to the coronavirus.”

About a week ago, an online day care service offering remote activities with fellow senior citizens and counsellors, via a video link, appeared to have solved the problem for Shun Wo, at least to a certain extent.

“She smiled again and was quite happy,” her daughter said.

Christian Family Service Centre (CFSC) was among the first NGOs in the city to go online to help the elderly at its day care facilities beat the blues during the crisis.

Participants get a weekly package delivered to their home and use its contents for activities ranging from cognitive training, such as putting date and weather stickers on a board, to simple arts and crafts.

“There are elements that stimulate the brain, as well as interactive activities that help old people retain their cognitive abilities, memory and self-management skills,” said Stephenie Man Tsz-ying, an occupational therapist at CFSC who helped design the programme.

One example, she said, was making paper soap, an activity that reminded the elderly of their childhood and the need to wash their hands.





Hong Kong has some 1.3 million people aged 65 and above, according to official figures. The non-governmental organisation, along with most of the 79 day care centres for the elderly in the city, has offered only limited services since February 4, after the government shut schools and government amenities to contain the spread of the virus.

Tong Choi-ying, CFSC's programme director for elder care, said just a month or so without nursing care, rehabilitation, recreational and other support services could mean "significant changes" in the conditions of old people with mild to moderate dementia.

"Some elderly who have learned how to use the toilet have to rely on diapers again. And some begin to mistake their family members for others, or forget their names altogether," Tong said. "Our care workers are very frustrated that some hard-won improvements in some elderly after their training have been lost and reversed."

This period of self-isolation at home has also added to the burdens of many family carers, Tong said.

"They are really feeling the strain as their older relatives' physical and mental health is worse, and sometimes they lose their temper and throw tantrums because they feel bored and can't go out and exercise.

"Many family carers are pressing for us to reopen our centres, and say they can't cope any longer."

Man said online programmes could be a temporary measure, especially with the government announcing on Saturday that schools and government amenities would continue their closure after a recent spike in Covid-19 infections.

But technology also had its limitations, Man said, as the online attention span among elderly people was shorter, and cognitive stimulation weaker, as face-to-face communication using all five senses was not possible.

Every week, Shun Wo looked forward to the few hours she could spend at a day care centre, exercising, playing cards, or just hanging out with her friends and the staff.

But the coronavirus pandemic put a stop to all that and has confined the 80-year-old Hongkonger to her home.

As local Covid-19 infections surpassed 300, the elderly woman, who suffers from mild dementia, has experienced a deterioration in her cognitive abilities after being stuck indoors for more than a month.





This has left her daughter, who did not want to be named, with something of a dilemma.

“Things need to be repeated more than once for her to understand now,” she said. “Everyone wants life back to normal ... But safety has to come first, as the elderly are highly vulnerable to the coronavirus.”

Tong Choi-ying, programme director (left), and social workers Chan Hiu-laam (centre) and Chan Ka-po at the Christian Family Service Centre in Kowloon Bay on a video call with the Chan family. Photo: Jonathan Wong

About a week ago, an online day care service offering remote activities with fellow senior citizens and counsellors, via a video link, appeared to have solved the problem for Shun Wo, at least to a certain extent.

“She smiled again and was quite happy,” her daughter said.

Christian Family Service Centre (CFSC) was among the first NGOs in the city to go online to help the elderly at its day care facilities beat the blues during the crisis.

Participants get a weekly package delivered to their home and use its contents for activities ranging from cognitive training, such as putting date and weather stickers on a board, to simple arts and crafts.

“There are elements that stimulate the brain, as well as interactive activities that help old people retain their cognitive abilities, memory and self-management skills,” said Stephenie Man Tsz-ying, an occupational therapist at CFSC who helped design the programme.

One example, she said, was making paper soap, an activity that reminded the elderly of their childhood and the need to wash their hands.

Hong Kong has some 1.3 million people aged 65 and above, according to official figures. The non-governmental organisation, along with most of the 79 day care centres for the elderly in the city, has offered only limited services since February 4, after the government shut schools and government amenities to contain the spread of the virus.

Tong Choi-ying, CFSC’s programme director for elder care, said just a month or so without nursing care, rehabilitation, recreational and other support services could mean “significant changes” in the conditions of old people with mild to moderate dementia.





“Some elderly who have learned how to use the toilet have to rely on diapers again. And some begin to mistake their family members for others, or forget their names altogether,” Tong said. “Our care workers are very frustrated that some hard-won improvements in some elderly after their training have been lost and reversed.”

This period of self-isolation at home has also added to the burdens of many family carers, Tong said.

“They are really feeling the strain as their older relatives’ physical and mental health is worse, and sometimes they lose their temper and throw tantrums because they feel bored and can’t go out and exercise.

“Many family carers are pressing for us to reopen our centres, and say they can’t cope any longer.”

Man said online programmes could be a temporary measure, especially with the government announcing on Saturday that schools and government amenities would continue their closure after a recent spike in Covid-19 infections.

But technology also had its limitations, Man said, as the online attention span among elderly people was shorter, and cognitive stimulation weaker, as face-to-face communication using all five senses was not possible.

Tong called for more government help as elderly people in low income households, often with no computers, smartphones, or internet services, were priced out of their online scheme, which costs HK\$250 a week.

The Social Welfare Department’s means-tested Community Care Voucher for the Elderly had by the end of last year subsidised 4,166 old people who receive day care, with the cap per person set at HK\$9,600 (US\$1,237) a month.

Tong said the department had recently clarified that the scheme would cover the online programme, but did not provide details on how poor people with no computer equipment could be helped.

“Apart from helping us with supplies of masks and sanitisers, which can only last for a month or so, the government should sort out its funding scheme and help those who need online care to get through this difficult time.”

– END –

