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China's Five-Year Policy plans for elderly care and the position of smart technology

China, the world's second most populous country, is experiencing a significant rise in its aging population. To deal with this challenge, the central government has issued a series of national Five-Year Plans (FYP) for elderly care since 1994. These policies have evolved. The 12th FYP (2011–2015) proclaimed a new elderly care infrastructure, with home-based care as its foundation. The 13th FYP, along with the 2017 Action Plan, promotes the development of Smart Health and Elderly Care services. Building on this, the 14th FYP (2021–2025) emphasizes the critical role of smart technology in enhancing elderly care. China's decentralized governance places the responsibility and charges for policy implementation on local governments, who will adapt the policies to suit local conditions. This paper compares more specifically the 13th and 14th FYP policy plans for elderly care of a few mid-sized urban centers, including Changzhou, Chengdu, Lanzhou, Nanjing, Qingdao, and Suzhou. Key themes of the national policies are not always fully reflected in local policy documents. In addition, the study examines the importance of attention given by the local policies to smart technology for the elder population. Smart devices offer practical solutions to enhance safety and self-support for the elderly. At market level, although older adults, accustomed to historically free healthcare services, remain often reluctant to purchase smart home technologies, smart devices represent a growing market.

Keywords: China, elderly care policies, smart technology

Biography

Following my studies in Chinese (language and literature) and a master of Health Economics (Paris), I pursued an international career. At my retirement, I decided to pick up my academic activities to work on a PhD thesis on the topic of aging and elderly care in China;