Chapter 44

An International Investigation of Driver’s Licenses for Dementia Patients with Considerations of Their Social Circumstances

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the trend toward the nuclear family and the phenomenon of under-population in rural areas has increased the number of aging people who live alone. Therefore, aging people are more likely to drive themselves to go shopping or to a hospital. However, the elderly person also has a tendency to display reduced abilities of cognition and judgment and, in severe cases, displays dementia.

The brief results of an international investigation of traffic accidents among aging people based on databases published by public institutions are discussed in this chapter. The aging rate and the number of dementia patients increase with the average life expectancy when it is over 70 years. Currently, the number of traffic accidents among aging people is increasing. Policies preventing the renewal of driver’s licenses for aging people are implemented in several countries. However, communication with family and neighbors is effective in preventing aging people from being involved in traffic accidents while walking.

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing proportion of young people moving to urban areas associated with economic development brings an increase in the proportion of nuclear families. Therefore, households composed of only aging people are increasing in the depopulated areas. For aging people, an automobile is necessary to go shopping or to a hospital. However, an elderly person may display reduced abilities of judgment and cognition and, in severe cases, may exhibit dementia. As shown in Figure 1, the number of patients with dementia is expected to increase around the world. In Japan, there is a duty for an aging person over the age of 70 to take driver’s licenses, and a person who has poor judgment and cognition cannot obtain a driver’s license. The loss of a driver’s license can make a person’s life difficult.

Rapidly changing lifestyles, the policies for living conditions, and security and social infrastructure for aging people differ by country. For instance, European countries have a policy of welfare, but Asian countries have a policy of economic growth. The policies depend not only on the economic growth but also on the convenience of everyday tasks for aging people and their support systems.

In this study, the social infrastructures for aging people regarding driver’s licenses and driving in everyday life are investigated for several countries.

EXPERIMENT

Method

Numerical data were collected from the publications and announcements of national organizations.

Results

A. Number of Dementia Patients

The aging rate, which indicates that the proportion of the population over 65 years of age in comparison to the total population (Japan Ministry of International Affairs and Communications, 2009), is plotted against the average life expectancy in

Figure 1. Predicted increase in the prevalence of dementia
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