Master’s Thesis
The Long-Term Care System in Israel – Structure and Problem Analysis
A Content Analysis of Expert Interviews

SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ACADEMIC DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PUBLIC HEALTH

BIELEFELD, FEBRUARY 1ST, 2010

FIRST EXAMINER:              SUBMITTED BY:                  
DR. ANDREAS BÜSCHER               MILENA VON KUTZLEBEN (1890614) 
                                     AM HULSBERG 74
SECOND EXAMINER:                  28205 BREMEN
PROF. DORIS SCHAEFFER            M.V.KUTZLEBEN@GMAIL.COM

EXTERNAL REVIEWER FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF THE EUROPEAN MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH:
PROF. HAVA GOLANDER,
SACKLER FACULTY OF MEDICINE, DEPARTMENT OF NURSING, UNIVERSITY OF TEL AVIV, ISRAEL
Abstract

Introduction In view of aging societies and an epidemiological transition, long-term care (LTC) became an urging issue that could no longer be neglected by health and social policy makers. Many industrialized countries are accepting the challenge to integrate LTC into health care systems that have been traditionally focusing on acute medical care. There are different ways of integrating the continuum of care in different countries and much to be learned from their unique experiences. Israel is among the countries that implemented an LTC insurance scheme following the policy ‘Aging in place’ with a community-based approach. The present thesis analyzes the Israeli LTC system based on a literature review and interviews with local experts.

Methods Data collection was conducted during a three-month field study. After evaluating relevant literature, a sample of 16 Israeli LTC experts was interviewed using the method of ‘qualitative expert interviews’. Results were generated by ‘qualitative content analysis’ according to Mayring.

Results Experts were generally satisfied with the LTC system and well-developed community services were seen as a major strength. Deficits cited were fragmentation of services, missing opportunities for comprehensive consumer information, shortage of health professional and challenges related to migration as well as the recruitment of foreign workers. All experts showed a great awareness of the problem of elderly neglect and abuse. The ‘Community Long-Term Care Insurance law’ was rated as a large breakthrough and success. Subjects of controversial discussions were the provision of services (in-cash vs. in-kind) and the future regulation of institutional LTC.

Conclusions Structuring and financing the LTC continuum is a significant and growing challenge in all societies. In general, institutional care is not the preferred option, neither by health professionals nor by individuals. As family resources are shrinking and a shift from informal to formal care is taking place, Israeli policy makers will be facing the challenge of improving the LTC insurance scheme, including institutional LTC. Furthermore, defining future demands and responsibilities as well as developing innovative solutions for community-based LTC will be issues to put on the agenda not only in Israel, but worldwide. International comparisons will be useful to detect general challenges and approved solutions and to enhance comprehensive strategies to develop LTC systems. Construct and validating a general model to describe and analyze LTC systems across countries will be an international challenge.