

Senior citizens deserve better healthcare

Kuala Lumpur (July 19): Old age is an inevitable part of life. As our parents grow up, they become sick, weak and weak.

While caring for the elderly can be difficult with its many demands, it is still important to provide them with what they deserve for their health, safety and well-being.

Abdul Hadi Zulkifli, a primary school teacher in Cheras, said, "It cannot be denied that taking care of the elderly can be a daunting task, and often I find myself caught between my own needs and those of the elderly. I'm the one I care about."

Abdul Hadi, 30, who is currently working and caring for his parents in their 50s, is part of the Sandwich generation – a generation of people, usually in their thirties or forties, Responsible for both raising children and taking care of their aging parents.

He and his other siblings both carry the burden of a busy life with careers and responsibilities, and ensure that their aging parents are looked after financially and physically.

Abdul Hadi visits his parents, who live alone in Rambou, Negeri Sembilan, almost every weekend. They previously had a cake shop, which was established in 2004, but had to shut down operations in 2015 and manage from home with the business generated from regular and loyal customers.

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senior care at its best

The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) forecasts a doubling of the population of Malaysians aged 60 and over to 5.8 million by 2030 from 2.3 million in 2020, making Malaysia an aging society.

In light of this trend, according to experts and industry players, there is great potential in the care of the elderly.

Seeing the growing demand for elderly care centres, Comune Living and Wellness (KLW), the largest co-living and wellness center in Southeast Asia, was officially launched on 12 May.

Managed by the hospitality arm of the UOA Group, the development, located along a tranquil 99-acre park in Cheras, is the first integrated facility in Asia that combines senior co-living spaces with a dedicated wellness hub. The project provides professional senior care services, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and pampering options for both residents and guests.

Mark Chen, general manager of KLW, said the hub aims to create a safe and engaging community for senior citizens where they can actively age with all the facilities and support they need to maintain their physical and mental well-being.

"Due to age-old stereotypes of what senior care is, we understand some of the stigma or guilt associated with the idea of placing a parent in care. This is why we create a new concept of senior care

based on world-class facilities. which enables senior citizens to have fun at a place that is accessible and enjoyable for their families to visit and even stay,” he said.

“Recent research has shown that community and social engagement are important factors in maintaining health and longevity and this philosophy has driven the development of K LW.

“We believe that our senior co-living model, supported by top-notch medical facilities and care, along with high-quality communal facilities and activities, provides a unique solution,” Chen said.

Variety of Features

K LW offers residents and guests over 40,000 different amenities and facilities in 20 square feet of space dedicated to wellness and community activities. These indoor amenities include a heated swimming pool, movie theater, and specially equipped gymnasium.

The lower levels of the development are accessible to the public and offer many other amenities that guests, residents and visiting friends and family can enjoy such as mini-marts, pharmacy, hair and beauty salons, and even That too a childcare center.

Others include multiple medical practices, such as a general medical practice, dental practice, ambulatory day-care screening services, medical aesthetics clinics, and anti-aging clinics providing services such as stem cell treatments. In addition, UOA has partnered with wellness specialist Tong Shin Tang to offer TCM services, such as acupuncture, massage, and cupping. These services include more than 50 private counseling and treatment rooms.

A collaboration between UOA and the Senior Living Specialist Care Concierge also sees K LW offering Comune Care – a facility with 260-resort-like assisted living suites for senior day-care services. It is the largest senior day-care facility in the country at 6,600 square feet, supported by nurses and experienced senior caregivers.

It allows senior citizens to receive the care they need as they participate in life-enriching community, cognitive and physical wellness activities. These activities are specially designed by occupational therapists to best suit their care needs and include an exclusive award winning music therapy program.

“Senior co-living residents will have access to independent or assisted living housing options within the development.

“Independent Living Studios are suitable for independent and active retirees, but can be customized to include specialized services such as full- or part-time care packages, an emergency response system, medical escort services and healthy meal plans. Assisted Living Studios Designed for senior citizens who require caregiver assistance round the clock,” he said.

Chen said its partner Commune Care operates assisted living units (ALUs), which provide care services for senior citizens, which account for an average of 15 percent of the 55 rooms currently operated.

As for the co-living hotel rooms, he said, a total of 212 rooms are operational, of which an average of 30 per cent people are occupied as of now. Of the total 792 rooms, 204 are ALUs (rooms) that serve senior citizens who require supportive care services.

The 173 sq ft studio queen room costs RM 180+ per night, compared to a two-bedroom studio, he said. Prices for a 347 sq ft two bedroom studio range from RM410+ per night.

As for its one-bedroom suite, the chain said it will be ready in late August, and room sizes range from 346 to 515 square feet and cost RM460+ per night.

“Independent Living Studio prices for active senior citizens will start from RM2,100 per month. As for assisted living studios for senior citizens who need more dedicated, round the clock personal care, prices will start at RM6,800 per month.”

Promotion of medical tourism sector

Meanwhile, Senior Lecturer, Department of Recreation and Ecotourism, Faculty of Forestry and Environment, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Assoc Prof Dr City Suriyavati Isa said that there is a need for proper management of senior care facilities for activities and programs for their residents.

He added that there is a great need for senior care facilities like KWL due to the changing pattern in Malaysian households as most of the family members are working, the cost of hiring a domestic helper has become extremely expensive.

“We have to be prepared as Malaysia is predicted to reach its aging nation status as it is estimated that 15% of Malaysian population will be over 60 in 2030.

“Currently, the government is launching a number of financial aids and programs for senior citizens in Malaysia, but there is still a need for improvement in many other areas, especially healthcare, financial services, city planning and social services,” he said.

That said, improving healthcare for senior citizens would augur well for Malaysia’s medical tourism sector, noting that medical tourism has been a significant contributor to national income for more than a decade.

“Since 2015, our country has been ranked among the top 10 medical tourism destinations in the world. In 2019, we received 1.3 million medical tourists and if we can improve our senior care facilities, we will see more medical tourists. Also, four private medical institutions from Malaysia received awards at the prestigious Medical Travel Awards 2020 in London.

“With the reopening of world borders to tourists due to the Covid-19 endemic infection phase, the number of international tourists to Malaysia, including medical tourists, will increase significantly. Over time, the domestic market for the region will continue to grow positively as many Malaysians are still unwilling to travel abroad.

“But for elderly people, it is best for them not to travel far from home as the pandemic situation is not completely over. Private health care is always the best option for Malaysians compared to government health services,” she said.

For this, City Suriyavati urged the industry players to strengthen their domestic presence and improve their services as well as take advantage of the vast opportunities available in the international markets.

Also, the government should provide bigger allocation to the public healthcare sector so that they can improve their facilities and services for the betterment of all.

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