Dementia — A Public Health Challenge for the Community

According to a recent study, there were 85,012 dementia patients aged 60 or above in Hong Kong in 2009. This figure is projected to reach 332,688 by 2039 [1].

As a result of the increasing prevalence of dementia among older adults, more regular unpaid care or support will be required from their caregivers, an issue that could undermine the social and economic development of our community.

In view of the growing impact of dementia on working dementia caregivers as well as the larger community, HSBC Life has again collaborated with the Sau Po Centre on Ageing at The University of Hong Kong and The Women's Foundation this year in a study entitled **"Working dementia caregivers: Challenges & Needs"**[2]. The study indicates that caregivers face serious challenges when taking care of dementia care recipients.

How much do you know about the challenges facing working dementia caregivers?
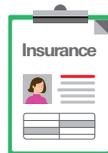
Financial stability

68%
of respondents perceived that their care recipients do not have adequate financial resources

Only
16%
of care recipients have insurance support

Insurance

Support network

36% of respondents devote

20 hours or more / week
to supporting care recipients

= ½ full-time job

Mental healthiness

Nearly
80%
of respondents reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless in the two weeks prior to the survey

Female working caregivers are more likely to feel stressed from fulfilling dual roles

Information accessibility

Over **50%** of respondents handle various caregiving tasks daily such as

Task	%
Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL)[3]	59.6%
Supervision/ Emotional support	58.5%
Activities of Daily Living (ADL)[4]	57.9%
Financial support	55.0%

The dual roles of working caregivers is demanding, leaving little time to seek information and supportive resources

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Facing the above challenges, we promote possible actions in different sectors of society to enable the community to be better prepared for the challenges brought by dementia:

▶ **Working dementia caregivers and their loved ones** need to start their financial planning earlier on to build a safety net.

▶ **Employers** should provide workplace accommodative measures, including a flexible work environment, to support employees with caregiving responsibilities and help reduce their stress by giving them more time to take care of their loved ones.

▶ **Communities and the insurance industry** should raise public awareness regarding the physical and psychosocial needs of dementia caregivers, and provide information and support.

▶ **Government** should enhance existing policies regarding dementia caregivers, consider legislation or creative public-private solutions for income protection, and establish a one-stop online resource platform.

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