



Home healthcare workers are a growing demand

8/12/2010



Both Japan and the United States are struggling to meet the rapidly increasing demand for home healthcare services as the baby boomer population ages.

The Asia Times [reports](#) that, in Japan, a country with one of the fastest-growing elderly population in the world, there has been a recent and heated debate about how to best attract more foreign caregivers to the country.

Currently, workers must qualify to become professional caretakers by taking a rigorous examination in original Japanese, but only a select few pass it, while the others remain in the position of caregiver trainee, which offers lower wages.

"Expecting foreign caregivers and nurses to pass the difficult examination in Japanese is unfair and smacks of discrimination," Tsutomu Fukuma, spokesman for the Japanese Council of Senior Citizens Welfare Service, told the news provider.

The Health and Welfare Ministry claims that the number of Japanese caregivers is declining steadily - there were 350,000 registered workers in 2009, which marks a loss of around 50,000 since 2006.

Some government advisors acknowledge that these aging baby boomers will have little independence without access to home healthcare. A drastic overhaul to Japan's closed labor market seems to be the solution to the problem, as the system has stringent regulations in relation to the number of immigrant workers allowed into the country, according to the news source.

The boomer trend of aging in place has taken hold in the United States, too, where an AARP [study](#) has found that 89 percent of seniors want to grow old in their home. Cincinnati.com [claims](#) that this has brought on an unprecedented demand for home healthcare services.

One company that is strategically planning for baby boomers is Home Helpers, which has 650 locations across the United States and Canada. President Emma Dickison told the news source that 78 different locations opened for the business last year and she expects around the same number this year.

Home Helpers focuses on the lighter side of caregiving, offering services such as running errands, preparing meals, housekeeping and personal assistant duties to seniors who are living at home.

Another field of home healthcare that has been growing is remote monitoring. One Boston start-up was recently [featured](#) in an Xconomy.com article, in which founder David Bernick told the website that his company, ElderSync, provides seniors and their caregivers with completely internet-based functions that aid both parties in communications, schedules, and health evaluations.