

35th Int. Home Care & Rehabilitation Exhibition 2008



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Creating a model for a prosperous aging society

Moving Towards H.C.R. 2008

Japan is now in the era of life spans that last on average 85 years. In this aging society, it is necessary to establish a social system that enables the elderly and the physically challenged persons to participate equally in the life of their local communities and society at large, and to enjoy the same active and affluent lifestyles, free from anxiety, as other members of society. In September 2007, Japan signed the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This agreement calls for member nations to make continuous efforts to improve their capacity to meet the basic needs of elderly and physically challenged persons regarding transportation, education, employment, leisure activities and so on by taking the appropriate steps.

While the Japanese government has so far been making efforts to promote barrier-free public buildings, renovation of train stations and streets and quality nursing care and welfare services, such as day care or home help, it is now expected to carry out measures aimed at realizing the concept of normalization.

Looking back at the year 2007, it was the year of “quality” testing. Starting with the scandal whereby food makers falsely labeled their product's shelf life, the quality of a variety of products and services—including housing, imported products and administrative services—came under public scrutiny. At the end of the year, this wave finally hit the industry of home care and rehabilitation equipment after a serious accident involving equipment that was manufactured at fairly low cost. There were also news reports that focused largely on false declarations made by a home help service business and senior citizens' facilities. Those

betrayals are now shaking consumer trust in “quality” at its core. As for deterioration of quality in the welfare services industry, one of the contributing factors is limited human resources. The falling birth rate is severely limiting the prospects for securing human resources in the future.



Under such circumstances, it is now essential for elderly people and physically challenged persons to use home care and rehabilitation equipment in their daily lives in the proper manner. This helps them to live independently and also assists caregivers. Development of home care and rehabilitation equipment incorporating new information and material technologies can broaden users' horizons and reduce the burden on caregivers. From now on, business, research institutes and the government must collaborate, seeking further progress in their research and development programs to provide quality equipment that users can trust. Those involved in the home care and rehabilitation equipment industry are expected to grasp the current situation and the challenges they face and to promote the continual development and dissemination of such equipment.

Meanwhile, along with the recent progress of globalization, the country's fiscal reconstruction and deregulation programs are having a serious impact on the existing social system. Problems such as abuse of children and the elderly, the lack of doctors and hospitals in rural areas and the widening gap between the rich and the poor are growing more serious. The social security system is an important safety net, giving security and support for people's lives and independence. Therefore, those who are involved in social welfare have to work harder to reconstruct it and to provide a health and welfare service that is trustworthy and high quality.

Shaping a prosperous aging society is a task for the 21st century and one that should be shared beyond national and regional borders. Expectations are on Japan, positioned as it is at the vanguard, to devise a social security system that can be used as a model by other countries.

Putting our Int. Home Care & Rehabilitation Exhibition on center stage, we have been engaging in public relations activities which include distributing information about health and welfare practices around the world, holding symposiums and seminars and publishing the H.C.R. news. In 2008, the Int. Home Care & Rehabilitation Exhibition will be celebrating its 35th anniversary. We are determined to strengthen our efforts to create an environment for the promotion of independent living for elderly people and the physically challenged persons. We thank you for your continued support and collaboration.

Health and Welfare Information Association

