

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:SS 2010

Department:Architectural Studies

Degree:PhD

Title:PROVIDING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTS IN NURSING HOMES FOR FRAIL ETHNIC MINORITY ELDERLY IN THE U.S.: THREE CASE STUDIES OF KOREAN AMERICAN NURSING HOMES

The older population in the United States is becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse due to significant increases in the numbers of ethnic minority and immigrant elders. Korean American elders are one of the fastest growing Asian ethnic subgroups in the United States. No published study was found that focused on Korean American nursing home environments and the needs, preferences, and levels of satisfaction of Korean American residents in ethnic nursing homes in the United States. The primary purpose of this study is to identify the features of the physical, social, and organizational environments of nursing homes in order to develop more culturally appropriate nursing home environments to improve quality of life for frail Korean American elders. This investigation involves three case studies of Korean American nursing homes on the East Coast and multiple data collection methods. Interview participants include 26 Korean American elders, 6 family members, and 5 staff members. All nursing homes emphasized organizational environments (e.g., special services and activity programs) rather than physical and social environments for the ethnic residents. All facilities employed some Korean staff and provided Korean ethnic foods at meals, church services in Korean, some cultural activities, and Korean cable-TV channels. Through a qualitative content analysis of data, two main themes and nine subthemes emerged. Korean American elders were less likely to be assimilated into American culture regardless of length of residence in the United States, and they wanted to maintain the Korean way of life after moving into a U.S. nursing home. Although the residents were satisfied with the nursing homes overall, they expressed two major points of dissatisfaction: no freedom and nobody to talk with them. The findings of this study will contribute to the knowledge of nursing home care providers and designers of nursing homes where many Korean American residents live.