

A Study on the Current Situation and Problems of the Development of Companion Services for the Elderly

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Abstract

With the acceleration of the aging process in China, the accompanying service, as an important part of the silver-hair economy, has gradually developed from a marginal demand to a mainstream market. The article systematically analyzes the current situation, problems and countermeasures of the development of escort service, and through the study, it is found that: the demand for escort service is strong but the supply is insufficient; the industry standardization is lagging behind; the pricing system is confusing; and the healthcare system is poorly articulated and other problems are prominent. In the future, it is necessary to promote the development of escort service in the direction of specialization, intelligence and universality through policy guidance, technological integration and standardization, so as to release its potential as a core growth pole of the silver hair economy.

Keywords

Accompanying service; aging; standardization.

1. Development status of accompanying medical service for the elderly

With the arrival of the aging society, some elderly people face many difficulties in medical treatment due to mobility difficulties and unfamiliarity with the medical process. The responsibility of leading patients through the consultation process used to be attributed to the family, but in recent years, under the combined effect of the lowering of the threshold for medical treatment in other places, the improvement of people's income, and the increasing involution of the job market, hiring a young companion has become an alternative choice for many families. [1] Together, these factors have contributed to the growing potential demand for escort services, resulting in the emergence of the new industry of escort services. Accompanying service is not just running errands, but also to provide companionship, and to promote communication between doctors and patients, accompanying personnel not only need to master a certain degree of medical knowledge and legal knowledge, but also need to familiarize themselves with the geographic environment of the hospital, the process of seeing a doctor and health insurance policies. Excellent companions need to be caring, attentive and patient, and provide all-round, high-quality services to meet the needs of patients.

In the context of the continued deepening of global population aging, China's silver hair economy has entered a period of rapid development. [2] In recent years, the state has introduced a series of policies to support the development of the aging cause and accompanying services, for example, the "14th Five-Year Plan" for the development of the national aging cause and the pension service system clearly puts forward the development of the "combination of medical and nursing" services, and encourages social capital to enter the For example, the "14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of the Elderly and the Elderly Service System" explicitly proposes the development of "medical and nursing" services and encourages social capital to enter the elderly health industry. These policies have provided a strong guarantee for the standardization and professional development of escort services, which has promoted the

rapid development of the industry. Meanwhile, local governments are also actively exploring innovative practices. For example, Songjiang District has set up an alliance to provide escort services for the elderly, which reduces the operating costs of escort service providers through capital subsidies and tax incentives, and encourages more enterprises to enter the field.

With the continuous upgrading of consumption, the needs of the elderly have changed from “survival” to “quality”, and accompanying services have become the core growth point of the geriatric medical and healthcare services market due to their convenience, safety, and emotional accompaniment attributes. In terms of market size, the market size of escort service has exceeded 10 billion yuan in 2024, with an average annual growth rate of more than 30%, and it is expected that by 2030, the size of the global escort service market is expected to reach 100 billion U.S. dollars. This trend shows that the escort service industry is ushering in a new stage of rapid development, and is expected to become an important growth point in the silver economy. Currently, the escort service market is still in the primary stage, with problems such as lack of service standards, insufficient professionals, and unbalanced regional development. However, according to research, the market size of escort service has exceeded 10 billion yuan in 2024, with an average annual growth rate of more than 30%. First-tier cities and some second-tier cities have strong demand but insufficient service supply; third- and fourth-tier cities have not yet been fully exploited due to low awareness and limited ability to pay.

2. Analysis of problems in the development of escort services

(1) Insufficient public awareness

Most people's cognition of escort service still stays at a superficial level, and they lack in-depth understanding of the services it can provide. Due to this lack of awareness, the popularity and acceptance of escort services in society is not high, and the demand of potential customer groups for escort services has not been fully stimulated. This not only affects the rapid development of the escort service industry, but also limits the breadth and depth of its market expansion. Therefore, to increase the publicity of escort services and improve social awareness is one of the urgent problems of the escort service industry.

(2) Uneven service quality

Uneven service quality is a significant problem in the escort service market. Some escort service providers, through the open platform, allow escorts to take orders independently after registering through cell phone software. However, most of these registered personnel are part-time escorts, lacking relevant systematic training and unified service standards, which cannot really facilitate medical treatment, but may increase the burden of patients. [3] This low-quality service will not only directly damage consumers' medical experience and trust, but also generate negative word-of-mouth among consumers, affecting the overall image and reputation of escort services. In the long run, it will seriously constrain the development and market expansion of the escort service industry, which is not conducive to the construction of a high-quality, sustainable development of the escort service system.

(3) Price constraints

Accompanying service charges in the market lack of uniformity, part of the service price is too high. The high price for some patients has become a major obstacle to their acceptance of this service, so that they have to give up or look for other alternatives to limit the popularity of escort services.

(4) Problems with the healthcare system

In order to ensure patient safety and medical order, hospitals often set certain restrictions on the entry of outside personnel. The market escort service market is mostly in the form of “small workshops”, and some escort companies are transformed from service-oriented companies,

including domestic helpers, which increases the difficulty of government supervision, resulting in the development of the escort service industry has shortcomings, it is difficult to protect the stability of the market, and against the moral and industry norms of the market chaos is endless. [5] At the same time, the internal consultation process, rules and regulations of hospitals may be incompatible or conflicting with the operation mode of escort services. These factors undoubtedly increase the difficulties and challenges in the actual implementation of escort services, and limit the scope of activities and service efficiency of escorts within the hospital. This not only affects the smooth operation of the escort service, but also adversely affects the patient's experience and the overall effect of the escort service.

3. Relevant Countermeasures to Promote the Development of Accompanying Services

(1) Development of industry standards and norms

Promote the standardization of the local escort industry escort service is still in the early stage of industry development, has not yet formed a standardized regulatory system. [4] In order to standardize the escort service market and avoid industry chaos, relevant departments and industry associations are actively promoting the development of escort service standards. For example, on July 11 last year, the Civil Affairs Bureau of Yangpu District, in conjunction with the Shanghai Pension Service Industry Association, took the lead in the city in releasing two group standards, namely, "Guidelines for Escort Practitioners" and "Escort Service Standards," and set up the Yangpu Escort Service Alliance together with 10 units to form a full-cycle alliance that integrates "market services, medical resources, skills training, financial support, and industry guidance" into one. It has formed a full-cycle development chain integrating "market services, medical resources, skills training, financial support, and industry guidance". [6] Although "escort" has not yet been formally included in the Dictionary of Occupational Classification of the People's Republic of China, relevant departments and industry associations are exploring the incorporation of escort services into the occupational classification system and formulating the entry qualifications and service standards for escorts.

(2) Strengthening supervision and training

Strengthen the comprehensive supervision of the localities and industries, and conduct comprehensive interventions on escort services, including the supervision of qualification examination, real-name authentication, rules and regulations, service categories, service processes, and service contents. In order to improve the professional quality and skill level of escort service providers, relevant departments and industry associations need to strengthen the vocational training of escort service providers. For example, the Shanghai Open University, in conjunction with the Shanghai Association of Elderly Service Industry, is conducting training for elderly service companion diagnosticians, and plans to release relevant training content and requirements.

(3) Vigorously promote technological innovation and informationization

With the popularization of the mobile Internet, escort services have begun to shift from the traditional offline mode to online intelligence. For example, through the development of platforms such as mobile APPs and WeChat Apps, patients can more conveniently make appointments for professional escorts to enjoy one-on-one full accompanying services. These platforms also use big data and AI technology to accurately match suitable escorts with the patient's condition, age, language needs and other factors, thus ensuring professional and personalized services. The use of internet technology not only provides basic services such as accompanying patients to the clinic, queuing for numbers, and decocting medicines on behalf of patients, but also expands value-added services such as electronic medical record management, online medical consultation, rapid delivery of medicines, and personalized health

reminders. These innovative services not only significantly enhance the convenience and comfort of patients' medical treatment, but also effectively meet the patients' demand for efficient and high-quality medical services, further promote the development of intelligence and humanization, and realize the diversification of the content of accompanying services.

In addition, through the Internet of Things technology, the accompanying service can realize seamless connection and data sharing with medical equipment and health monitoring equipment, thus forming a more intelligent and comprehensive health management system. This not only improves the efficiency and accuracy of medical services, but also provides patients with more convenient and personalized health management solutions. The application of this technology has brought about a revolutionary change in accompanying services, allowing accompanying personnel to obtain patients' health data in real time, respond and process in a timely manner, and provide patients with more attentive and professional services.

(4) Improve the price guidance mechanism and explore multiple payment models

Government-guided pricing: tiered pricing according to service content (basic companionship, specialized companionship) and regional consumption level, limiting unreasonable charges. Innovative payment channels: promoting commercial insurance to cover the cost of accompanying medical consultations, and piloting the "medical insurance personal account to pay for accompanying medical consultations" to reduce the pressure of out-of-pocket expenses on the elderly.

(5) Enhance marketing and public awareness.

Public service promotion: Promote the case of escort service through community lectures and short video platforms, highlighting its dual value of "safe medical treatment + emotional accompaniment". Linkage with medical institutions: set up consultation points for escort service at hospitals' guidance counters and geriatric departments to reach the demand groups.

4. Conclusion

As an important part of the silver hair economy, escort service is moving from marginal demand to mainstream market. In terms of social value, accompanying service not only eases the problem of medical treatment for the elderly, but also promotes social harmony by reducing the pressure of family care; in terms of economic value, its industry chain is highly extendable, and it can lead to the synergistic development of multiple fields such as medical care, insurance, and intelligent hardware. In the future, the accompanying service should focus on the three major directions of "specialization", "intelligence" and "universality": one is to improve the quality of personnel through the qualification and training system; the other is to expand the service by using technologies such as IoT and AI. The first is to improve the quality of personnel through the qualification and training system; the second is to expand the service scene by utilizing the Internet of Things, AI and other technologies; followed by expanding the popularity of the service through policy support and payment innovation. Only in this way can the accompanying service be built into the core growth pole of silver hair economy, and truly realize the social vision of "the elderly have medical care and companionship".

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