

Around the World

Policies and programs to support persons living with Dementia in Macao

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The Salvation Army Macau Rui Xi Integrated Elderly Service Center, Macao

Highlights:

- **Macao's First Comprehensive Dementia Service Center:** Established in 2021, the center employs the "Montessori" and "Eden Alternative" intervention methods.
- **"Montessori" Intervention:** Focuses on environmental support and meaningful activities, effectively reducing behavioral symptoms in people with dementia.
- **Global Recognition of Macao's Dementia Policy:** Rated as the 5A highest globally by Alzheimer's Disease International's *From Plan to Impact VI* in 2023.

Macao's Dementia Policy, launched in 2016, aligns with the WHO's *Global Action Plan on the Public Health Response to Dementia 2017–2025*. Recognized as the 27th dementia policy globally, it includes a 10-year framework to promote dementia-friendly communities and establish a comprehensive dementia service network.

In December 2021, Macao opened its first integrated dementia care center, guided by the Social Welfare Bureau's "people-oriented" policy emphasizing family care and aging in place. Operated by the Salvation Army Rui Xi Integrated Service Centre for Senior Citizens, the center provides day care and residential care for elderly individuals with moderate to severe dementia.

The Salvation Army Rui Xi Integrated Service Centre for Senior Citizens provides both day care and residential care services for elderly individuals with dementia, particularly those with moderate to severe physical impairments. The center operates under the philosophy of "community care" and embraces the "Eden Alternative" and Montessori-based intervention methods to deliver flexible services tailored to the physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs of its residents. Its "people-oriented" approach emphasizes individualized care, which includes four key elements: valuing

people with dementia, treating them as individuals, understanding their perspectives, and fostering supportive social psychology.

The Montessori-based approach focuses on personalization and environmental support. Staff undergo Montessori training to master intervention techniques, enabling them to design personalized life schedules for residents that reflect their interests, skills, and abilities. This approach affirms residents' participation and presence in daily life, helping to reduce mental and behavioral symptoms. It also encourages caregiver involvement, shifting focus to patients' strengths and promoting positive family support.

The center also emphasizes "environmental support," incorporating Macao's cultural and historical elements to create a safe, familiar environment. For example, one resident, Peter, displayed wandering behavior, often taking items from other rooms. Staff discovered Peter had been a warehouse manager and enjoyed organizing goods. In response, they created a simulated warehouse activity, allowing Peter to safely organize and count supplies with staff assistance. This meaningful, goal-oriented task improved Peter's engagement and well-being, demonstrating the effectiveness of Montessori interventions in fostering motivation and happiness while reducing loneliness and behavioral symptoms.

Addressing the broader community, the center recognizes the need for greater dementia education in Macao. Its community promotion strategy focuses on three pillars: dementia-friendly groups, dementia-friendly citizens, and dementia-friendly communities. The center participates in the Macau Community Dementia Friendly Alliance and facilitates cross-sector collaboration, including partnerships with the medical community. These efforts aim to raise public awareness, reduce stigma, and create a safe, inclusive environment where older adults with dementia can remain active and integrated into society.

In 2023, the center launched a *Dementia Friendly Community Plan* in collaboration with schools, government departments, and businesses, pooling resources to prevent dementia and foster a friendly community. This initiative earned the *Top Ten Quality Social Service Award* in Hong Kong and Macao, organized by Lions Clubs International District 303.

Macao SAR Government has made significant advancements in reducing waiting times, improving diagnosis rates, integrating care, and fostering dementia-friendly environments through a seamless service network that bridges medical services and community care. As a result, Macao's Dementia Policy was ranked at the highest

global stage (Stage 5) in Alzheimer's Disease International's *From Plan to Impact VI* in 2023.



Kevin Leong is a social work practitioner in Macau with over 20 years of experience. He played a pivotal role in establishing Macau's first comprehensive mental rehabilitation hospital service, where he served as the director and developed a supported employment program for people with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues. Currently, he is the director of The Salvation Army Macau Rui Xi Integrated Elderly Service Center. At the same time, he became active in the social welfare sector of Macau, and this year he served as the Vice President of the Macau Lions Club.