

Nursing Home Care at Ban Bang Khae, Bangkok, Thailand



Established 1953 as a charitable elderly home, Ban Bang Khae is the very first elderly center in Thailand. The center currently serves as a model for the provision of support to Thai elderly. At present, the center is home to approximately 240 residents and is the hub for promoting physical and psychological well-being for the elderly in Bangkok and seven provinces. Fully equipped with ten social workers, a doctor, two nurses; four nurse aids; two physiotherapists, one occupational therapist, and one psychologist, Ban Bang Khae is one of the best recognized elderly centers in Thailand.

Based on an interview with Khun Sommai, the psychologist who has been at Bang Khae for 14 years, home residents can be divided into three groups: Group A with high self-care; Group B with moderate self-care; and Group C who are bed-ridden. Other than the self-care category, the

residents are classified based on their capacities for fee payment. No fees are charged for those who are in urgent need: namely, ailing and being without financial/social support. Fees applied to those who are physically fit and residing in the Center's forty dormitory rooms. Five residents share a room for the estimated monthly fee of 1,500 Bath (i.e., \$34 USD). For couples or same-gender siblings, two can be assigned a room for the fee of 2,000 Bath. Similar monthly fees and health condition requirement apply to those applying for the eleven one-bedroom ensuite bungalows, who will be required as well to pay a one-time renovation fee of 300,000 Bath (i.e., \$6,750 USD) upon their entry. All residents are provided with facilities including three meals daily and regular medical checks, both upon their entry and during their stay. Only individuals who are 60 years old can apply for the dormitory and bungalow and the current waiting list is extremely high and generally involves at least a 10-year waiting time.

According to Khun Sommai, the increasing number of the elderly applying to stay in the home helps reflect the shift in the Thais' attitudes toward the home as well. Despite the previous reluctance of the Thai for leaving the care of their elderly parents/relatives to the home, the time pressure and compromised work-life balance leads many to view the home enrollment as an optimal way to care for their aging loved ones. Khun Sommai mentioned a recent contact by two female siblings, who after a long discussion with their mother, agreed that having the mother under the home care would help assure their mother's day-time support when the siblings have to work.

Khun Sommai mentioned that relatives come to visit the residents quite regularly. The residents themselves, should they be fit enough, could go outside during the day and stay overnight, with pre-arrangements. Within the center, the residents' scheduling is relatively full and enriching. Various activities are offered based on the residents' interests. There is a within-center Elderly School, where IT and handicraft lessons are offered, including to younger people. Mental spa, occupational and rehabilitating activities, and elderly clubs are offered.

In the afternoon of the day of the visit, a few gentlemen were practicing Petanque outdoor in preparation for the approaching Center Sport Day. A few spent their time in the Center's Snoezelen Room. Close by, in the Center souvenir shop, three ladies were sewing and presenting their hand-made pillows to potential customers. In front, an award-winning female gamer was practicing her on-line Stack Tower Game in an IT room. In addition to these daily activities and their relatives' visits, Khun Sommai mentioned that many of the residents draw strength from their religious beliefs. Many reportedly looked forward to the opportunity to do religious merits. Praying and attending to religious ceremonies are parts of the residents' routines.

Khun Sommai mentioned her contentment in working and living at the staff residence within the center. She mentioned her perception of those in the community as her friends and relatives. With her being the only psychologist within the center, she reportedly has to be versatile. In addition to psychological support, she recently supported a will execution for one resident, for instance. She mentioned the necessity for the elderly to make proper preparation for financial arrangements and adjustments in their community prior to enrolling in the home.