Mini Oral

Systemic Resilience in Action: The Pivotal Role of Primary Care in Sustaining Home-Based Medical Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Taiwan

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Background & Objective

Since 2016, Taiwan's National Health Insurance has reimbursed Home-Based Medical Care (HBMC) for homebound patients.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals were heavily burdened by acute infection control and inpatient demands.

This study examined whether primary care clinics compensated for reduced hospital-based HBMC capacity and helped sustain care continuity.

Methods

Retrospective study
using Taiwan National Health Insurance data

Study period
2016–2023

Population
Home-Based Medical Care patients

Stratification
demographics, urbanization, and facility type (hospitals vs. clinics)

Statistical analysis
chi-square test for shifts in service distribution before vs. during the pandemic

Study timeline

Pre-pandemic
2016–2019

Pandemic period
2020–2021

Post-pandemic
2022–2023

Hospitals

Compare shifts in service distribution

Clinics

Study Population

80,399
HBMC patients included

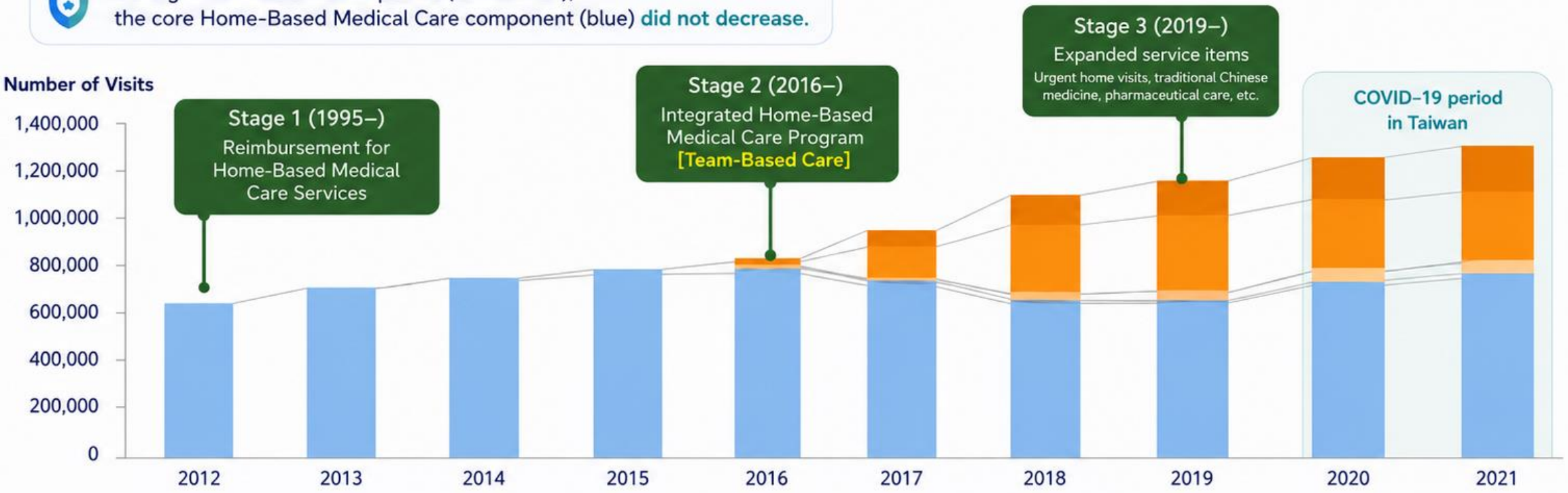
Mean age
>80
years

Patient demographics remained broadly stable across periods

The main change occurred in provider distribution, not patient profile

HBMC Volume Was Maintained During COVID-19

During Taiwan's COVID-19 period (2020–2021), the core Home-Based Medical Care component (blue) **did not decrease.**

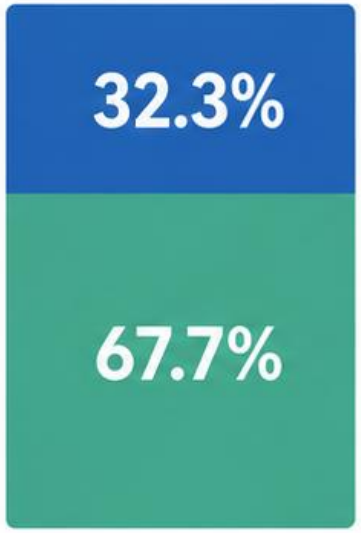


Home-Based Medical Care Service Visits

Key point: the blue HBMC service volume remained stable during 2020–2021.

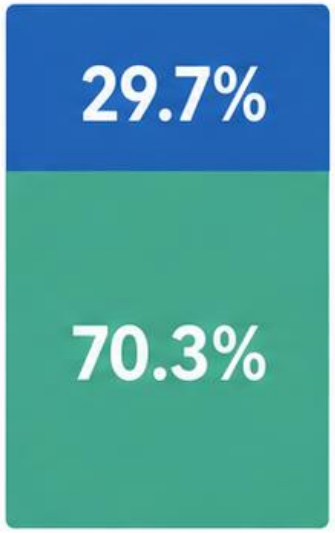
Key Result: Structural Shift in Service Provision

Before the pandemic



- Medical Centers + Regional Hospitals: **32.3%**
- Primary care clinics: **67.7%**

During the pandemic



- Medical Centers + Regional Hospitals: **29.7%**
- Primary care clinics: **70.3%**

$p < 0.001$

Community clinics absorbed the caseload displaced by hospitals.

Interpretation & Relevance

- The pandemic temporarily reduced hospital participation in HBMC.
- Primary care clinics functioned as a critical backstop.
- The healthcare network demonstrated system-level resilience through collaborative redistribution.
- A strong community-based primary care system helps preserve continuity and equity during crises.
- Theme alignment: Resilience and Equity

Take Home Messages

- COVID-19 reshaped HBMC delivery in Taiwan.
- Hospital service share declined during the pandemic.
- Primary care clinics expanded their role and sustained care continuity.
- A strong primary care network is a key stabilizing force for resilient and equitable health systems.

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Thank you