

The importance of maintaining good vision among older adults and their views on improving access to preventive vision care: Updated results

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Background

- Preventive vision care (PVC) is a proactive approach that centres on early detection of eye conditions through regular eye examinations and timely management of eye conditions.
- Previous studies have documented the barriers older adults face in accessing PVC ¹. Although PVC programs for older adults have been implemented in some countries and regions ², PVC has not yet been established as a formal preventive program in Hong Kong.
- Older adults currently access PVC through the private sector, relying largely on self-motivation and non-targeted government-subsidised healthcare vouchers. The value individuals place on maintaining good vision serve as an important cue to action.
- At the service delivery level, involving community resources has been shown to improve PVC uptake among older adults ³. District Health Centres (DHCs) are available community resources within the primary healthcare system and could potentially be involved in PVC delivery.
- Incorporating service users' views into PVC planning is essential for identifying how available community resources can be used to improve access to PVC.

Research gap:

- Existing studies focused on the impact of vision loss, particularly among individuals with existing vision loss. How the general older population values maintaining good vision remains unknown.
- A holistic strategy has been developed to address the barriers older adults face in accessing PVC ³. However, the service delivery of preventive programs has changed following the establishment of DHCs. Optimizing the use of available community resources within the primary healthcare system is essential for improving access, while older adults' views and preferences regarding this approach remain unknown.

Purpose

- To understand the importance of maintaining good vision among older adults.
- To understand older adults' views on improving access to PVC.

Methods

Study design

Qualitative study using individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews.

Eligibility

Community-dwelling older adults in Hong Kong aged 65 years or above.

Purposive sampling



Data collection

All interviews were audio-recorded, and field notes were taken during the interviews. Demographic information was collected by the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. Inductive coding was used to allow themes to be derived from participants' narratives. The data were analysed thematically following a six-stage analytical approach ⁴. Data saturation was assessed iteratively throughout the analysis.

Results

Participants

- Twenty-five participants were interviewed.
- 6 participants from two public parks in Wong Tai Sin and Yau Tsim Mong
 - 10 participants from three Elderly Centres in Sha Tin, Sham Shui Po, and Central & Western
 - 9 participants from the RCGFS

Participants characteristics including age, sex, CSSA status, educational level, living condition, eye care utilization, DHC membership were heterogeneous.

Data analysis results

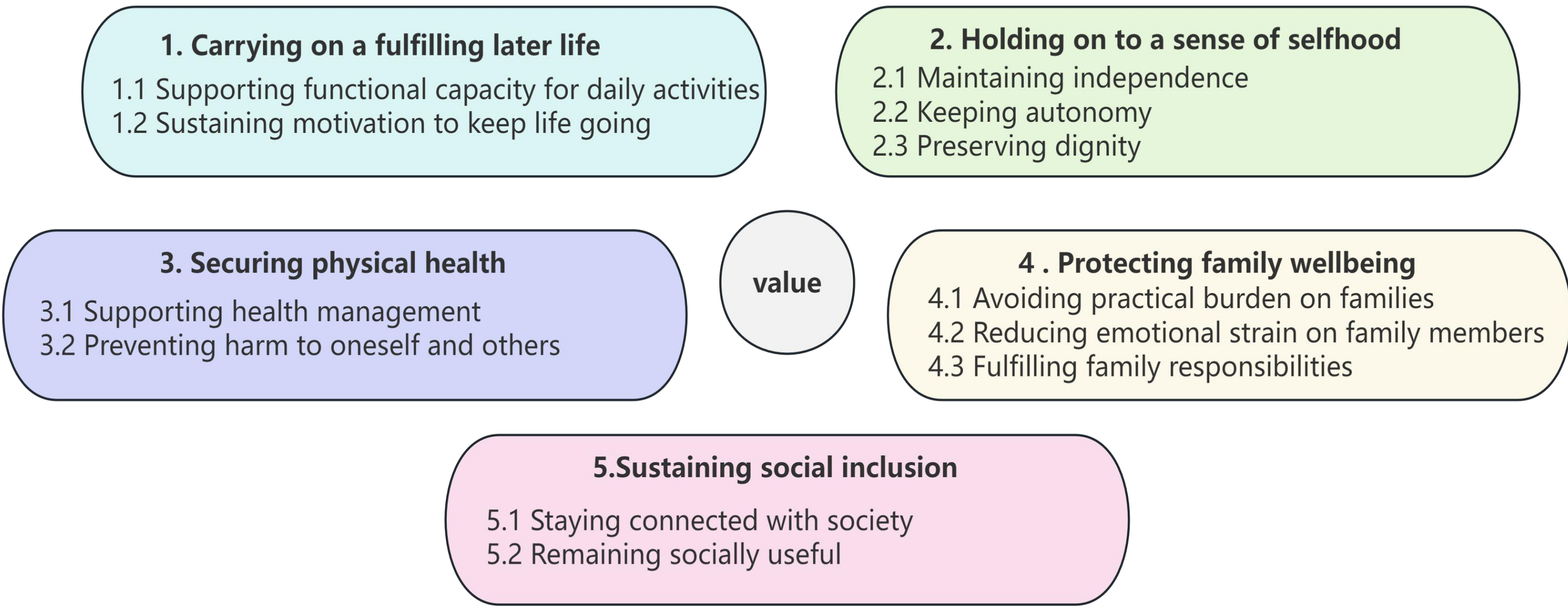


Figure 1: Research themes relating to the value of maintaining good vision

Quotations:

That's why we always talk about being independent and self-reliant when you have good vision. It means being able to do what you want and rely on yourself, and to have the freedom to make your own choices in everyday life.

(INT045, Male, aged 70)

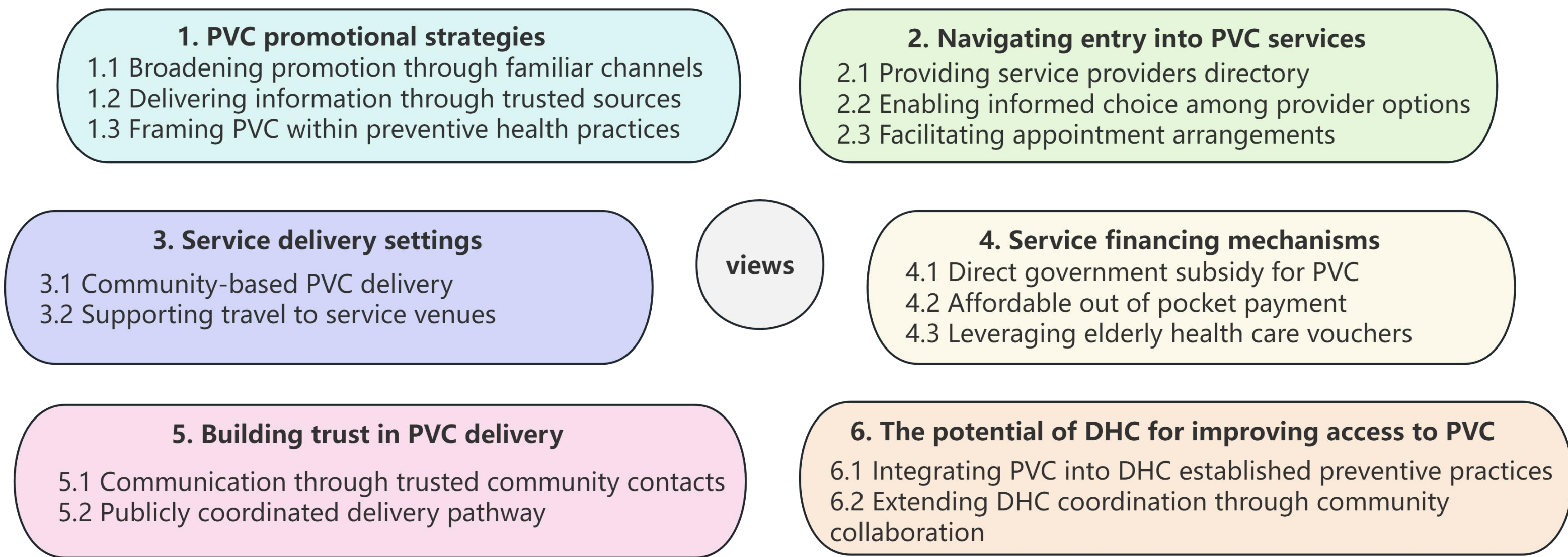


Figure 2: Research themes relating to the views on improving access to PVC

Quotations:

Older adults need to understand its importance. If they don't have obvious problems yet, they may feel that everything is fine. But if they know what could happen if certain conditions are left untreated, or how it could affect their daily life, then they would realize it is actually very important.

(INT36, Female, aged 66)

Discussion & Conclusion

Vision was valued as more than a functional ability. Participants placed great value on the holistic health and spiritual wellbeing associated with good vision, as well as its contribution to the wellbeing of others. These findings broaden the concept of value beyond traditional clinical measures to encompass the wellbeing of individuals, families, communities, and society.

Optimizing access requires coordination among service providers, communities, and government financing mechanisms throughout service users' access pathways. A DHC-coordinated PVC model was recognized as promising for integrating service delivery components and contributing to holistic preventive care. However, its ability to reach a wider older population would depend on partnerships with other community organizations.

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