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Understanding the Importance of Day Care Centres for Elderly in Mumbai

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Abstract

In India there is a need for a double income, small homes and nuclear family system which have all played a role in senior citizens being neglected. This leads to age related issues of health, loneliness, dementia and basic support. Many are ill-treated and sometimes abandoned by their families. A day care centre provides a safe and secure space for senior citizens to go for solving their personal issues. The elderly are given care, medical assistance, emotional support, aid, advice and a space where they meet others in similar situations. The day care centre also acts as an outlet for senior citizens to spend time and indulge in recreation activities, outings and gatherings. Not only does this give them emotional support but also has a positive impact on their mental and physical wellbeing. Supporting day care centres in the future will create a healthier senior citizen community. It will create more awareness on issues faced by senior citizens and how to tackle them by indulging elderly to spend their time with the other members as friends to talk, advise and support, creating a healthy social and personal attitude. Day Care Centre is an important step towards minimising social isolation among elders, creating happy and positive environment in their family and home.



Keywords: Elderly, Day Care Centres, Mumbai, Institutional care, Recreation, Mental Health and Physical health.

Introduction

Ageing occurs within a social context that ranges from the micro scale of the family to the macro scale of the society. Ageing is a social phenomenon taking place within a social context and exerts various constraints upon the individual. Population ageing is silently becoming a major challenge for our country. According to estimates, by the year 2050, 20% of our population will be over the age of 60 years. Average life expectancy at the age of 60 years is also expected to increase to 30 years. But adding years to life may not always mean adding life to years. In other words, advancing age brings with it the threat of frailty, dependence and handicap.

The demographic estimates say that the number of younger people is likely to decrease due to lower birth rate. So, care in old age that was so heavily dependent on family will be in threat. The decreasing family size, immigration and changing family system have started posing challenges for care in many parts of the country. The elderly can no longer blindly depend on family to take care of them.

Old age homes are filling the gap to a certain extent. But as of now, it is not a popular and affordable choice for most in our country. Traditionally, old age homes were meant for the poor and destitute and hence mostly managed by charitable organisations, but in recent years, paid facilities have also emerged to cater to the needs of middle and upper middle-class older persons, who can pay for care in old age. However, due to its unstructured growth, there is no regulatory in their development. This is a cause for concern in our changing pattern of society and increasing demand of such institutions.

Day care centres which are the newer concept in elder care institutions are similar but rare institutions which are in increasing demand among elderly today. They are meant for those elderly who continue to stay in their own houses but during the day time when their family members are out or have gone for their work. Elderly come to spend quality time with the people of their age and involve in different recreational activities. These centres are successful in giving them better mental health and act as a counselling centre. They are also providing services to take care of such elderly who are in a very poor health status and need 24 hours assistance. Since they cannot be left alone at home. Children leave them in day care centres and day care staffs take care of the elderly needs.

The facility of day care centres and creches to take care of babies and infants of working parents is a common and popular phenomenon in the urban areas in India. But the concept of a day care centre for the elderly and dependent parents of working children is yet to catch on in India. Realising the urgent need for such a facility some of the people have individually started a day care centres in different cities of India on the pattern of cities in abroad to cater to elderly people who are left alone at their home during day time when children or family members are not present at home. In recent years, day-care has provided care in the community to many different groups. For people with psychiatric and mental disabilities living at home, as well as elderly people with special needs, day-care has often become an alternative form of care in an attempt to support independent



living. Day-care, in most cases, represents intermediate care between institutional and home care with a clearly stated function.

Methodology

This study was conducted to obtain the views of the elderly on the gains from attending day-care centres in Mumbai. A purposeful sampling procedure was employed 24 participants were selected for interviews from the two-day care centres of Mumbai. Persons were eligible for inclusion provided they had enrolled for day-care centres for everyday or weekly visits, they were above 60 years of age, did not suffer from memory problems, were able to express themselves when questions were asked. 12 women and 12 men were included in the study. These elderlies were part of the day care centres programmes for elderlies.

Following day care centre were included in the study:

Serial Number	Name of the day care centre
1	Varista
2	2nd Innings Day Care and Activity Centre

Findings

With the breakdown of the joint family system in the society, many elders experience social isolation both within the family as well as with the outside world. Senior citizens are generally not counted as valuable contributors to the society and are often ignored because of their infirmities and lack of technological awareness. They are even considered as unproductive and a burden on the economy. The elders are often deprived of real-time conversations and communication with their children, who see their parent's ideologies, views and interests as outdated and incompatible with their own. With the increasing demands of a developing economy, the needs of senior citizens are almost null. In India, senior citizens do not enjoy any state-supported financial security such as a social pension or health insurance. These are better addressed and taken care of, in developed economies across the world. Even then, it is felt that the need of the hour for the elders is more of psychological support than financial or physical support. Elderly psychological needs, pastime, social visits etc. needs to be taken care off by the parents.

Elderlies miss the joint family environment, that they used to enjoy in their younger days. Even though they cannot bring back that familial environment, we today can try to recreate it with proxies like taking them to relatives where they can revive their memories, and also to other places for a change of ambiance to refresh them. While old age homes are many, day care centres are an emerging phenomenon. Day care centres address the specific need of taking care of the elders during the day when their supporting children are unable to take care because of work or other compulsions. These centres provide miscellaneous services during the day as required. These services are available at reasonable costs and can be availed without having to pay excessive fees or be permanent residents of the care centre. These centres also provide wholesome social time for the elderly parents as they get to spend time with people of their age group during the day, while being able to return to their homes and families at the end of the day. This experience is similar to that of playschool children, who go to their creches on a daily basis. The elders can read, play, listen to



music and watch the television. Different recreational activities are organized and exercise classes are conducted regularly.

Day-care is a relatively new form of care for elderly people in our country. The aim of this social programme is mainly to counteract social isolation. Day-care services in Mumbai catering to the needs of a certain number of elderly who can afford such facilities. There are different categories of day care centres available in Mumbai. First type of centres is which focus on basically social programmes which offer social activities such as outings, festivities, tea and coffee parties, games and birthday celebrations. The clients are offered recreational activities, festivities, outings and sometimes physical exercise. The participants' attendance is voluntary and not regulated by decisions or referrals from health care experts. The main objective of the second type of day care centres are medical programmes which focus on rehabilitation in order to encourage clients to live there to treat their medical conditions. Hence, application involves children or relative's permission in co-operation with medical doctors of elderly. Programmes in this group that were strictly aimed at people those were not able to handle the serious medical situation and they are in the need 24 hours assistance. The principal aim of such centres is to maintain capability and to give patients focus and care on their health during day time. Some of such day care centres provide physical training to each patient according to an individual planned worked out by professionals like physiotherapists, occupational therapists or physicians. These centres demand compulsory attendance for elderly.

The third type day care for elderly people with physical and mental disabilities. Like day-care for elderly people with dementia schizophrenia etc. This type of day-care serves a group of clients with mixed and extensive needs for mental or physical problems. The fourth type of day-care centre provides rehabilitation. The staff in these day-care units are trained occupational therapists and physiotherapists. The patients attend the unit usually for a period of three to four months to improve or cure their health situation. Admission is strictly regulated and usually requires a referral by the physician to get the proper results of the treatment done.

Day-care is usually available five days a week, in the day-care centres that receive the eldest participants there are large proportion of unmarried and married elderly people. Day-care is usually available five days a week, on average six to eight hours a day. The number of clients varies from 10 to 50 per day. In the open facility people come and go less regularly than in medical programmes since it requires regular attendance. During the course of the study it was understood that day care centres are there to boost the spirits of senior. Day care centres have facilities like newspapers, magazines, a good library, television and computers. At day care centres seniors socially engage and interact with their peers of their own age group. Their spirits are boosted and mood is uplifted by bonding, sharing and laughter. The centres offer wide range of activities to keep the elderly occupied with activities designed to meet physical, emotional and social needs. The activities include memory games, physiotherapy, songs, meditation, counselling, medical check-ups, picnics, yoga sessions etc. Talks and interactive sessions on topics of interest such as health and age-related issues, current affairs, etc. are also conducted. Members get to learn new arts, crafts and games. Birthdays, special days and religious festivals are celebrated. Old age or senior citizen day care is a planned program of activities designed to promote well-being though social and health-related services.



Senior citizen day care centres operate during daytime in the weekdays within a safe, supportive, cheerful environment. They try to provide nutritious meals that accommodate special diets for elderly. Old Age or Senior Citizen day care centres can be public or private, non-profit or for-profit. The intent of a senior citizen day centre is primarily two-fold, to provide an opportunity to get out of the house and receive both mental and social stimulation. To give caregivers a much-needed break in which to attend to personal needs, or simply rest and relax. Recreation organizers, social workers, yoga and physical trainers are appointed for daily activities for elderly.

Day care centres provide a selection of topics for their preference, in the application form at the time of enrolment itself so that they can arrange for discussions and talks on these subjects on day today basis. They also arrange visits to local places of worship and places of tourist interest, depending on their preferences, and their physical and financial abilities. Their objective is to encourage discussions and conversations among the elders through social interactions and group activities. The members can also cook to their own tastes if they so wish in the kitchen or order food at the day care centre, if they so desire. The charges are on an actual cost basis in day care centres. The charge for day care centres is Rs 200 per day or Rs 1000 a week or Rs 2500 a month depending upon the type of facilities and activities provided. Other elderly-friendly facilities include library-cum-reading room, yoga room, recreation hall, a food court for group dining, mini gymnasium, memory clinic, in-house pharmacy, laboratory facility, walkways with proper landscaping and conference hall. The care homes also provide unique ideas like emergency bell switches along with railing support in all the key areas. Switches are also made available in toilets so that support staff may provide better assistance in case of emergencies. The home is manned by social workers and health care professionals. The home has also set up a small skill lab to engage elderly residents in activities like handicraft making, art and gardening etc. Every month, the social worker will prepare a wish list in these homes and arrange programmes according to the list. To connect the elders with the outside world, regular outings, beach visits, interaction with youth and student groups are also organised.

Seniors are prone to experience loneliness. With their children having moved overseas or to other parts of India for career reasons, elderly people experience the effects of loneliness and depression. As they age, seniors get deprived of social interaction and mental stimulation. They also face old-age disabilities, health problems and in many cases, financial difficulties too. It is important that seniors combat loneliness by socially engaging with others. For an enhanced quality of life, they need to lead an active life, maintain relationships and perform activities that are meaningful to them. Maintaining a sharp mental faculty is as vital as being physically active. Senior Citizen day care offers a win/win situation for everyone in the family not only the client or member who attends the program, but also for the family member who has primary responsibility as caregiver. Senior Citizen day care provides a much-needed respite for the caregiver, affording a break from the physical demands and stress of providing round-the-clock care. For the participants of an old age day care centre's benefits can be extensive a safe and secure environment in which to spend the day, enjoyable and educational activities, improvement in mental and physical health, enhanced or maintained level of independence, socialization and peer support and nutritious meals and snacks.



Conclusion and Suggestions

With rapid advances in healthcare and urbanization, senior citizens are living fitter and longer lives. They may need some assistance, but can largely manage on their own. At the same time, rapid urbanization has changed the circumstances for the elderly; no more large family structure, an empty home, a certain degree of isolation, loss of respect, lack of care and a sense of insecurity or depression. Senior citizen daytime centres are developed professionally by a group of committed people, to provide seniors a unique environment that shares, cares, respects and supports them in their daily life. To a senior they provide a friendly social environment that includes health education, mental stimulation, physiotherapy exercises, basic nursing services and access to physicians, or just a place to rest for a while and socialize with the peer group.

Day care centres are ideal for seniors citizens who live with someone who is frequently away from home, have children who no longer stay with them, leaving them lonely and isolated, suffering from a chronic disease or recovering from a serious illness, is isolated or depressed and would enjoy socializing and meeting peer group, have slow or restricted movements, need basic nursing services, want to learn new hobbies or like social company, can no longer structure his or her own daily activities, can't be safely left alone at home, could be in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, recovering from paralysis etc. With nuclear families on the rise, many elderly parents are forced to depend on old-age homes. To help such people socialise and enjoy the dusk of their lives. The multi-facility day-care centres are being set up with the help of the local self-government bodies. There are many elderly people who live alone as their children may be abroad or busy. Day-care centres will help them engage in recreational activities and make their lives better. The existing old-age homes will be upgraded.

Day-care centres for the elderly are common in the western countries and such centres are established as part of routine services to provide health and social programmes for elderly attendee during the day. By relieving the family members and caregivers of the burden of taking care of the elderly so that they can concentrate on other responsibilities during the day; it can strengthen the relationship between the elderly and their family members. Day-care centres can also offer rehabilitation programmes, social interaction with peers and participation in campaigns, meals and physical activities. It is a chance to socialize and have fun in a community-based group. Such activities in the day care centre are expected to improve the quality of life of the elderly. It is understood from the study that further plans are required to replicate the day care centres in our country so that more seniors can be served. This centre would not only keep the elderly parents in good spirits but will also comfort the supporting children with the reassurance that their parents are well protected and taken care of, while they are away. Their parents can spend their time with the other members as friends to talk, advise and support, creating a healthy social and personal attitude. Day Care Centre is an important step towards minimising social isolation among elders, and creating happy elders and a positive environment in their family and home. So that our elderly always remains smart and happy in their lives and in their families. It is a need that the citizens should become more sensitized to the needs of the elderly. This can also translate into government schemes focusing more on this sector through policies and interventions.



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