

Review article:

Old Home and Caring Elderly Population: Need or Dilemma

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Abstract:

Background: Number of elderly population is growing very faster all over the world. This growth in elderly population relative to other age groups challenges mostly the existing health services, family relationships and social security. In this article we tried to address the gravity of the issue at family, social and national level. We also examined the parents care scenario in Western World and Asian societies.

Observations and conclusions: Our observations revealed that old people from both West and Asia are interested to stay in their home with their children and grandchildren. This is a way to transmit their real life experience to their third generation (grand children) which, however, is very essential for the emotional, humane and psychological development of our future generation of the World. The present day capitalistic attitude is eroding the emotion and affection to the old and a big number of them end up in West and although smaller in Asian countries, but showed increasing trend, end up old homes. There are, however, situations where facilities needed for care of older people who lost their children and sometimes ailing people in native countries where their children living or settled abroad. Taking into consideration of the growing issue and empathic care of those facilities in such situations run following guidelines and ethical rules.

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Introduction:

Population aged 60 years and above is growing very faster in Bangladesh like other developing countries, compared to the total population of that territory. Using the census and secondary data, the paper investigates that increasing longevity and declining fertility are combining to convert the population age structure from young to the old. This combination is resulting implications on the family health care and unmet need of health care services in the public sector. Growth in elderly population relative to other age groups challenges mostly the existing health services, family relationships and social security. With continued population ageing, the loss of cognitive function will potentially cause enormous social and economic burden on families, communities and, to the country. The support index shows that there will be a fewer persons to support elderly population in future with the implications in traditional family care living under the same roof. The care index shows the cost of burden for the long term care associated with the shift in the population age structure. As a matter of consequence, societies of these rapidly developing countries will confront population aging without

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traditional kin support.

By 2025, five Asian countries i.e. China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh will account about half of the world's total elderly population. The cultural and religious tradition of Asian countries is expected that the families and communities will care for their own elderly members but rapid socioeconomic and demographic transitions, poverty of the family, changing social and religious values, influence of Western culture and other factors are breaking down the community care system. Depending upon the achievement of replacement fertility by the year 2025 one in 10 will be elderly and by 2050 one in 5 will be elderly in Bangladesh. Bangladesh will face many difficulties in managing these challenges for large elderly population. This includes factors such as changing the family structure, poverty, social and cultural norms and traditions, and inadequate health care facilities etc. for the elderly population¹⁻².

Extract from some case studies/life scenarios:

A real life scenario from an Asian Country

Vikram Muthanna, a renowned columnist of the 'Star of Mysore (SOM)' newspaper wrote his real life experience with deep understanding from the core of his soul: "*Yesterday a news item in SOM caught my eyes: 'Day care centre for elder citizens inaugurated in the city'. As I read the news, it felt like I was reading an advertisement for children's summer camp. There was yoga, indoor games, picnics etc. This service by the State government is indeed very thoughtful and what's even better... it's free. Now the double/triple income families in the country, along with their children can drop off their parents at their respective day care centers and pick them up on their way back from the work.*

As I was appreciating this particular service with a friend, she wished that there were also some temporary boarding accommodations for the elders so that they can be "housed" while the family takes a vacation. She said, between her very aged mother and father-in-law they cannot take long out-of-town vacations. It may seem like a mean thing to say, but it's a valid point. Caring for elders is really difficult. From making sure they don't slip and fall in the bathroom to making sure that they take their medication, caring for an elder person in the house demands time and attention for appropriate care.

In Mysuru, a lot of old people live alone. In areas like

Saraswathipuram every house has a child in a foreign country and every other house has an old couple living on their own. And every other real estate agent is circling that area for a bite of real estate. So it can be lonely and insecure. But by far I feel bad for the parents who have to fend for themselves or have to ask for help from others.

Among my peers from the college I am the only one who returned my home from the USA. And now I regularly extend assistance to a few friends' parents. While I am happy to do so, it is terrible to see how awkward they feel while taking my help. Some of them are so overcome with guilt that they apologetically say, "My son is supposed to do this, but we are troubling you... ..Sorry Baba for the troubles made, and thank you." But then one can't blame the children. They have to go make a life for themselves too...and Mysuru is not exactly a city brimming with the possible opportunities"³.

When Mr. Vikram Muthanna was talking about his charity and caring services towards his friend's parents one of his colleagues said, "They took care of us, now it's our turn". That man also said he had come back from the USA to care for his parents. But then another guy added "You made your money so you came back to Mysuru; what about others who are not as fortunate as you are? Also about 'they took care of us...' well they took a decision to make you, so it is their duty to care for you." From a neutral perspective we can say that both the arguments are fine, but there is a "moral" responsibility to care for our parents. Who one can become sure that their parents will get highest care as they need even if he lives abroad. Also let's not forget we each and every one may get old one day...and karma is a just round the corner³.

Another alarming report on BBC showed the miserable life of Japanese elderly people⁴. It describes the story of a 69 years old Japanese named Toshio Takata. He had broken the law several times because he was poor, he wanted somewhere to live free of charge, even if it was behind bars. "Toshio represents a striking trend in Japanese crime. In a remarkably law-abiding society, a rapidly growing proportion of crimes are carried about by over-65s. In 1997 this age group accounted for about one in 20 convictions but 20 years later the figure had grown to more than one in five - a rate that far outstrips the growth of the over-65s as a proportion of the population (though they now

make up more than a quarter of the total). And like Toshio, many of these elderly lawbreakers are repeat offenders. Of the 2,500 over-65s convicted in 2016, **more than a third had more than five previous convictions.**

Japan is one of the richest countries of the world, an icon of chivalry of Capitalism. But BBC report revealed the dark side of its services towards aged people⁴”.

The harsh reality of modern age is that the old people have to be prepared to take caring of themselves. The first step is to become the financial ability. For the old people, financial independence is very vital and most important. With that one can have health and peace of mind...which makes for a stress-free retired life.

But to be financially healthy in old age, the planning has to begin early into one’s career. Unfortunately, this is on the back-burner in today’s “live today like it’s your last” attitude, not knowing that this saying does not apply to the “materialistic lifestyle” where buying things is considered “living your life³.”

The rise of capitalism changed the mindset of new generation in such a way that the present real-estate obsessed state-of-mind, the biggest danger for older parents is their own greedy kids and relatives, who fight over property or force parents to give up their property. Indian Parliament has made the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007⁵. Similar law was also passed in Bangladesh and many other countries⁵⁻⁶. It is very important to implement the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007⁵⁻⁶. These noble legislations are some milestones for the entire modern World.

We feel it proud that, “in our culture we respect our elders, we care them at our (their) own home!” , but more often the reality is that many of us simply tolerate our elders by keeping them at home in a bad environment because putting them in an old age home is taboo. We have to get rid of such dichotomy of mind. This too has to stop. And it will, as big brand builders are coming up with retirement communities with all facilities for the aged like in other developed nations³.

When there is real need then there is no shame in putting our parents in an old age home. In fact, our parents may be happier as they will make new friends, develop new hobbies and regain their sense of independence. There are examples of some iconic personalities who lived their last days in old home i.e. Kerala’s 93-year-old V. S. Achuthanandan and Tamil Nadu’s 91-year-old M. Karunanidhi, both are

honorable former Chief Ministers of their State³.

A real life scenario from a Western Country

“According to AARP, nearly 90% of people over age 65 want to stay at home for as long as possible. Living at home and staying in a familiar community may offer benefits to seniors’ emotional well-being — but research indicates that a staggering number of seniors who should be receiving assisted living care are still living at home. In such cases the standard solution seems obvious: make them move to an assisted living community where social activity, health monitoring and medication management is all included. However, moving to senior living can be a difficult decision, particularly if your loved one is not keen on moving⁷”.

For now in most Asian countries, no matter the debate as to who should take care of our ageing parents? The bottom-line is someone has to undertake the responsibilities. Therefore, either the children can pay for a good care-taker or check them into a good nursing facility... ‘Or make sure you have good friends who will help you care for your parents’³.

Basic Needs in the Old Home Care and its importance:

Elderly care emphasizes the social and personal requirements of the senior citizens who need some assistance with their daily activities as well as health care needs, but who desire to age with dignity. Elderly care is also focused on satisfying the expectations of two tiers of customers: the resident customer and the purchasing customer, who are often not identical, since the relatives or the public authorities, rather than the resident, may be providing the cost of care in any means. If the residents are confused or have communication difficulties, it may be very difficult for the relatives or other concerned parties to be sure of the standard measured care being given, and the possibility of the elder abuse is a continuing the source of concern⁸⁻¹².

Impaired mobility is a major health concern for the older adults, affecting near about 50% of the people over 85 and at least a quarter of those over 75. As adults lose the ability to walk, to climb stairs, and to rise from a chair, they become completely disabled in most of the cases. In the standard social housing, the elderly people feel happiest with homes which are modern, easy to maintain, keep clean, and/or they are adapted for disability along with the children, grandchildren and other members of the family. A lot of old population prefers to live in the ground floor which helps them not having to climb stairs. The most common need is a walk-in shower where they

have a bath not facing hassles of handling the heavy doors. All these cares are not at all available there in the old homes. So, the houses must be built and decorated as of their needs and comforts be ensured. We may identify very basic and most important needs in the old home are available to facilitate our old persons¹¹:

- Providing them the safe surroundings and environment for physical and psychological well beings to keep them very confident living in love and peace. There should be a blending of spirituality for moral peace^{9,12}.
- Should be accounted for presenting as well as ensuring most hygienic, healthy food stuffs which is a must; otherwise they will feel unsecured and irritated
- Possible preparations and arrangements of the required facilities for medical care on regular basis and also having equipment to meet emergencies
- Supplying and administration of the proper and timely medications advised by their doctor
- Ensuring to handle the provision for care round the clock
- Arranging and maintaining adequate social interactions
- Looking after their financial and emotional problems, besides how they are dealt at home this can save everybody a lot of last-minute trouble when the need will arise.

These may meet most the needs required in the old home.

Performing all of these tasks, the caregivers must be needed to remain healthy first. A good number of studies show that the caregivers or those who take care of the elder population may suffer from anxiety, depression, stress, and musculoskeletal disorders. Looking after the caregivers themselves is vital and very important before s/he starts elderly care.

Traditionally, care for older adult persons has been the responsibility of the family members and was provided within the extended family home under their looks. Increasingly in the modern societies, care is now being provided by the state or charitable institutions. The reasons for this change include decreasing family size, longer life expectancy, geographical dispersion of families, and the tendency for women to be educated and work outside the home. Home health care assistance services at home or in a care centre have been the ability to become an important and integral part of the old life as everyone

stride through their golden years and plan the next steps for her/his newest journey, passion, interest, or goal. With so many agencies available in the market today, it can be very difficult to make the right choice easily to be confirmed.

However, with a keen eye on these aspects such as professionalism, empathy, reputation, and more, the care seeker can take the necessary steps to easily discern the best service for her/his unique and individual needs. Providing the person concerned with the level of assistance s/he may require and a frequency that s/he prefers, home health care's are invaluable the resources that let everybody focus on becoming the healthiest and most dynamic version of them ever - with a life full of optimism, spirit, grace, enthusiasm, and most importantly the strength⁸⁻¹³.

Therapies designed to improve the mobility in elderly patients should be built in accordance with diagnosing and treating for specific impairments, such as reduced strength or poor balance. It is very appropriate to compare the older adults seeking to improve their mobility to the athletes seeking to improve their split times. The people in both the groups perform the best when they measure their progress and work toward specific goals related to strength, aerobic capacity, and other physical qualities as they are required. Someone of the attempts to improve an older adult's mobility must decide what impairments to focus on, and in many cases, there is little scientific evidence to justify any of the options. The family is one of the most important providers for the elderly people. In fact, the majority of caregivers for the elderly persons are often members of their own family, most often a daughter or a granddaughter. Family and friends can provide homely and lovely environment for olds by providing necessary help, money and other logistics, and meet social needs by visiting most frequently, also taking them out on trips, etc^{12, 15}.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

From the above discussion, it is obviously helpful and required that preferably the old people and senior citizens should stay in their extended families. This is their real home, which they formed them throughout their entire life, where they found the peace and tranquil to live in touch with their next generations. This is the primitive 'Central Dogma' of transmitting life experiences as well as expectancies from their grandparents to the new/coming generations. This will also help to enrich the future generation to get lively exchange of experiences in a passive and friendly way. Without the touch of the grandparents these new generations are vulnerable to different

stigma of present capitalistic civilization.

Still we acknowledge that in many situations some families are unable to look after their parents with due care they deserve, it is not a negligence; it is due to the poverty or scarcity of resources or manpower. Sometimes all the offspring of an old couple may live abroad for their struggle for existence. In such situations these type of old people need to be cared in professional 'Old home' in professional manners. That's why we cannot ignore the need of 'Old home' also even in the Asian perspectives. These old homes must be preferably established and maintained by the government because if we allow it in private sectors they will make our parents the 'means' of their money making business.

Elderly home care is a must and we prefer the self-home is the best option to choose for our helpless elderly population i.e., our mothers and fathers.

Conflict of Interest: nil

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