



POSITIVE SIDE OF OLD AGE HOMES

Geriatrics

Dr Zeba Firdous Shaikh

JR III Geriatrics, GMCAurangabad.

Dr Mangala Borkar Sonavani

Professor and Head, Department of Geriatrics, GMC Aurangabad.

Dr Shailaja V Rao

Associate Professor, Department of Geriatrics, GMC Aurangabad.

Dr Kiran Nandedkar*

Lecturer in Medicine, posted in Geriatrics GMC Aurangabad. *Corresponding Author

Dr Pankaj Mahajan

JR II Geriatrics, GMC Aurangabad.

ABSTRACT

Background and Aims: The Geriatric population is growing throughout the world. Care of elderly of society is an unmet need. In India, Old Age Homes (OAH) are looked upon rather negatively, and family is stigmatized if their elder is kept in OAH. This is unlike the situation in Western countries, where the care homes are considered a necessity and an asset for the aging population. Less is known about response of Indians about residing in care home, hence this study was conducted. **Methods:** We interviewed 26 inmates of an old age home using a questionnaire. **Results:** We observed that 80 percent of inmates in the old age home that we studied were happy due to the pleasant ambience, caring attitude of employees, disciplined routine, appropriate entertainment and reasonable facilities. **Conclusions:** Instead of treating care homes as a stigma, we must accept them as a necessity and make it Geriatric friendly. It is better to look at the positive side of Old age homes as many of the aged may have to spend the last years of their lives in these facilities.

KEYWORDS

Old Age Home(OAH), Care homes, Geriatric

INTRODUCTION :

Trends are changing. Seniors are becoming more independent, do not wish to live the stereotyped life expected of elders after retirement and wish to continue the kind of life they live earlier without getting too many responsibilities like, looking after grandchildren, thrust upon them. Nowadays, many affluent seniors who have moved to assisted living or independent senior living facilities, prefer it to their homes for a variety of reasons - they can live the life they want, assisted living homes offer free transport that takes away the stress of driving, they get a more balanced diet without having to cook. They do not have to maintain the house, they do not have to tolerate or engage in family quarrels and disputes. In fact, relations with children often improve because they do not meet all the time. If elder is alone, the safety, the convenience is all the more welcome.^{1,2}

Seniors who can afford it, feel that independent living meets one's needs without encroaching on one's independence. They can continue to live as individuals. The places are senior friendly. Someone takes care of the housekeeping, garden, laundry and cooking. They can travel without having to worry about the maintenance of their house. Medical care may be easier, loneliness is kept at bay. It is this change of attitude and approach that we must inculcate in poorer old persons who can not choose where they live but are forced to live in an old age home. If they look at the positive side of it and learn to brush away the circumstances that made them leave their home, they will be much happier.^{1,2}

Longevity is increasing across the world and the proportion of the world's population of over 60 years of age is expected to double from about 12% to 22% by 2050.⁸ India is the second largest population of the elderly (60+) in the world. The population over the age of 60 years has tripled in last 50 years in India and will relentlessly increase in near future. In 2001, the proportion of older people was 7.7% which increased to 8.14% in 2011 and 8.94% in 2016. According to 2001 census, there were 75.93 million Indians above age of 60 years: of them 38.22 million were males and 37.2 million were females. The projections for next five censuses till the year 2051 are: 96.30 million (2011), 133.32 million (2021), 178.59 million (2031), 236.01 million (2041) and 300.96 million (2051). Along with the rising numbers, the expectancy of life at birth is also increasing. The expectancy of life at birth during 1996-2001 was 62.3 years for males and 63.39 years for females. The projected data for the periods 2001-

2006, 2006-2011 and 2011-2016 are 63.87 and 65.43 : 65.65 and 67.22; and 67.04 and 68.8 years respectively for males and females. It has further increased by 2 years now. The conventional concept of family in India, which was to provide support to elderly, is changing with urbanization, modernization, nuclear families and increasing number of working women. Thus older people have become more vulnerable.³ The very concept of an old age home is not acceptable to most Indians, who look at it as a stigma. A Care home is a new residence for those old people who have no one to look after them or those who have been thrown out of their homes by their children. The inmates get facilities for a routine living, like food, clothing, and shelter according to their income, some recreation and company of persons of a similar age group which takes some of their loneliness away.

There are 1150 Old age homes in India, according to study conducted by TATA Trust.⁹ There are various reasons for the increasing number of old age homes in the society. ⁴Inability to maintain himself (destitution due to poverty), inability of family members to provide care to the old person, indifference of the family members, neglect or outright abandonment by the family, adjustment problems with the family members are some of the common causes. He may be concerned about his declining health and would find the home more assuring and comfortable especially if person is alone.⁵

Concept of OAH is gaining momentum, and the number of people seeking institutionalization is rapidly increasing. However, not much is known about the response of residents to institutionalization. Hence the present study was conducted. There are nearly 200 Old Age Homes in Maharashtra. Matoshri old age homes were established in each district nearly 20 years back as trusts, but only a few are functional now (Aurangabad, Latur, Jalgaon and one near Nashik)

Materials and Methods :

This is a study of 26 elderly inmates of Matoshri Vrudhashram, 9 Kilometers from Aurangabad, conducted in July 2018. The Vrudhashram is quite beautifully landscaped and has four separate 20 bedded dormitories, free of cost, dining halls for men and women and 25 private double occupancy rooms for reasonable fees. There is a Goshala and plenty of greenery in the campus. The inmates have a punctual fixed schedule of the day which includes 3 meals, tea, prayer, relaxation, yoga etc. Many persons in the city celebrate their happy occasions like birthdays by donating a fixed amount to the old age

home, whereby the managerial staff arranges for a special lunch for the inmates. Food from outside is not permitted. They have a regular weekly visit by doctors affiliated to the old age home. Bhajans, entertainment activities are arranged from time to time.

The healthy inmates living in the dormitories (free of cost) have to do their own personal work like washing clothes, cleaning utensils. There are few bedridden poor patients who are looked after by staff. There are special rooms which are available at reasonable fees, where there is a facility for availing the services of housekeeping staff.

Since the Coronavirus outbreak, visitors have strictly been banned for visiting OAH, inmates are also not permitted to leave the campus and most of the staff lives in Campus.

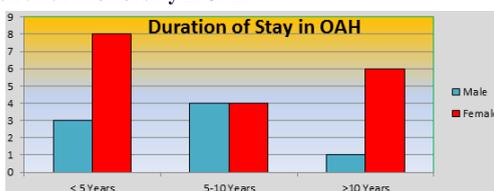
Observation and Results :

Table 1 : Age Distribution of cases and Sex distribution



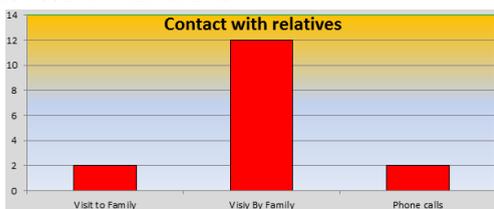
Majority of people belonged to 60-65 year age group. Females in our study were 70 percent.

Table 2 : Duration of stay in OAH



Majority i.e 42 percent people are staying there since 5 or less years.

Table 3 : Contact with relatives :



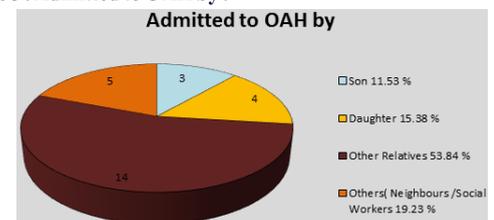
It has been observed that the main mode of contact with family is visit by relatives.

Table 4 : Reason for stay in OAH :



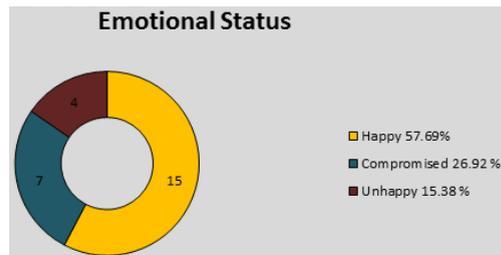
Majority (46%) inmates have joined OAH because they were alone. In 26 percent cases, son was not willing to keep.

Table 5 : Admitted to OAH by :



53 percent people were admitted by other relatives, 15 percent by daughter, 11 percent by son.

Table 6 : Emotional status :



Majority of inmates, 58 percent, were happy at the OAH.

DISCUSSION

On the basis of interaction with the inmates, we found that the majority were quite happy in the OAH, mostly because they had no choice or the OAH offered better facility than they could get at home. Nuclear Families, changes in values, materialistic attitude of younger generation is increasing the need of Old age Homes. We observed that loss of spouse, poor financial conditions, maladjustment with offspring or their in laws or death of offspring forces people to live in old age homes. India needs to set aside a greater share of resources for senior citizens and budgetary allocations for elderly care have to be better utilized and made more effective. The private sector is coming out with senior-friendly living spaces, including assisted living, serviced apartments, foodservices, and special facilities. Easily accessible medical benefits and entertainment activities are also provided, which have proven to be an attraction for many senior citizens. In India as well as most of the countries in the world, the exact number of care homes for the aged, as well as the number of beds they provide is not known. Most of the information that we have is an estimated or extrapolated one. Considering the increase in the aging population and changes in the social fabric, many more well managed care homes are the need of the hour.

Contrary to the perception of the society that all elders in old age homes are there because they were driven out by their children, many are there because they are alone. They may have lost the spouse, never had children or the children died. Some may only have daughters, whose families do not permit them to stay with them. Even more often, among traditional Indians, parents do not wish to go to stay in their married daughter's house, though we do see a slow change in this trend. The only son may be abroad or in a distant city and a single old parent can not cope any loner. Of course, in one third to one fourth instances, it does happen that the son and daughter-in-law abandon them. This is the group that is more likely to be unhappy.

CONCLUSION :

We observed that 80 percent of inmates in the old age home that we studied were happy due to the pleasant ambience, caring attitude of employees, disciplined routine, appropriate entertainment and reasonable facilities. We feel that inmates of OAH should be treated with dignity and if their fitness permits, they can help in activities of OAH with token remuneration. Instead of treating care homes as a stigma, we must accept them as a necessity and make it Geriatric friendly. It is better to look at the positive side of Old age homes as many of the aged may have to spend the last years of their lives in these facilities. Why make them more unhappy? It is better to encourage them to look at their new home positively and face this challenge of development. Make a home, outside home, seems the mantra.

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