

# Growing need for day-care centres

Statistics for Alzheimer's disease and dementia are startling, to say the least. According to the Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India (ARD-SI), dementia strikes 2 per cent of 65-69-year-olds, 5 per cent of 75-79 olds and 20 per cent of who are between 85-89 years. Fifty per cent of these dementia patients suffer from Alzheimer's.

Yet, experts and organisations in the city say they are still struggling with basic awareness and lack of provisions in Mumbai. At a time when Alzheimer's symptoms are misunderstood as an inevitable decline in faculties, patients and their families are in dire need of better geriatric care, trained caregivers and respite programmes. However

geriatric care, trained caregivers and respite programmes. However, all the city has to offer is one day-care centre at the Dignity Foundation and one old-age home, Dr Dias Nursing Home in Bandra that admits Alzheimer's patients.

“Most families cannot take care of patients without external help. We are inundated with requests for trained caregivers — most of these requests are declined because we, too, are trying to make ends meet,” says Shailesh Mishra of the Mumbai chapter of the ARDSI. The body conducts workshops on care-giving and soon plans to start certificate courses for nurses, hospital staff and paramedical staff.

At the Dignity Day Care Centre, 15 members at various stages of the condition, spend time with occupational therapists — exercising, playing mind games and practicing pet therapy. Kalyani Sahasrabudhe, the volunteer in-charge, is glad of its benefits. “I see a notable change in the seniors who spend time here as compared to my father who led an isolated life till the end. Socialisation is necessary for patients — it delays the deterioration process,” she says.

Dr Devendra Save, consultant psychiatric at Bhaktivedanta hospital agrees the issue is yet to receive its due. Inadequate infrastructure, lack of memory clinics and few spe-

its due. inadequate infrastructure, lack of memory clinics and few specialists at hospitals only add to the woes of Alzheimer's patients. "Most leading hospitals choose to set up commercially viable surgical departments. Who would choose to set up a geriatric or a memory clinic that fetches less returns? Dealing with Alzheimer's is largely left to the family as patients need full-time caregivers and the attention does not 'show results' in terms of better health. Voluntary participation from citizens is the way out." -KG

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