



CREATING A HEALTH WORKFORCE FOR INDIA'S SENIORS: GERIATRIC CAREGIVERS

By Priya Anant, Co-Founder, Life Circle Health Services Pvt. Ltd.

Life Circle Health Services Pvt Ltd, incubated at T-Hub, Hyderabad provides home nursing and caregiving services to seniors in Delhi, Hyderabad, Guwahati and Chandigarh

The Importance of Geriatric Caregiving

Is India a young nation or an old one? Most of us would answer- young! That's right. But, there is a rapidly growing segment of our population that needs attention and priority. These are seniors. People who are over 60 and face heightened possibilities of chronic health conditions like diabetes, hypertension and dementia. Many sick seniors see mul-

tiple specialists for co-morbidities and have prescriptions, lifestyle recommendations from each of these, which need to be made sense of. In most instances, it is families that synchronise care for their family members. This places significant care burden on such family members. This scenario creates the need and an opportunity for a new cadre of healthcare workforce: Geriatric Caregivers. These are workers who

are willing to work in homes of seniors, with their families, taking on the part of the work of caregiving. "Caregiving refers to the provision of assistance to another person who is ill, disabled, or needs help with daily activities. It often requires attention to the physical, mental, social, and psychological needs and well-being of both the family caregivers and the elderly person requiring care."

The Growth of Home Healthcare Services

We have seen a spurt in Home healthcare services in India over the last 4-5 years. We have seen the emergence of large enterprises and huge investments being pumped in. Home health care includes an entire gamut of services to populations of all ages and across conditions. It includes services of nursing, caregiving, teleconsultations, diagnostics, intensive care, physiotherapy, medicine and consumables supply and rental of medical devices.

Home health care has a clear edge over care in hospitals. Industry estimates allude to home care being cheaper by about 20-50 percentage, compared with institutional care. The non-monetary benefits by way of disruption to the life of family members, convenience to seniors is significant. Global evidence shows that effective home care services for seniors can lower burdens on the already crowded institutions, prevent emergency hospital visits, avoid healthcare associated infections, accidents and avert dangerous conditions benefitting from early diagnosis and treatment or preventive care.