

# Geriatric health in India: An emerging need



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### Abstract

Geriatrics in India is crucial for the healthcare of older people, with 8% of the population being over 65 years old. By 2050, the country will have a 300 million elderly population, necessitating immediate improvements in geriatric healthcare. Degenerative disorders and sensory impairments burden older people, leading to poor utilization of healthcare facilities. The Indian government has taken steps to protect the elderly, including the establishment of geriatric departments at hospitals like AIIMS and NIMHANS. However, more focus on geriatric medicine is needed to ensure healthcare professionals are equipped to provide quality care.

**Keywords:** Geriatrics, Advancement, Healthcare, Rehabilitation

### 1. Introduction

Older peoples are valuable assets of communities. Geriatrics mainly focus on health care of elder people. In India 8 % of the total population are elders (more than 65 years). By 2050, India is projected to have 300 million elderly population. To meet the specific demands of older persons, this sharp rise calls for immediate breakthroughs in geriatric healthcare.

In India, the elderly population are burdened with degenerative disorders, impairment in sensory organs like vision, hearing, in addition to communicable and non-communicable disease. High cost for treatment for elderly patients may lead to poor utilization of health care facilities (1). Geriatric care is not included in curriculum, and therefore paramedical professionals do not have proper training of geriatric care (2). As an important step towards rights of the elderly, in 2007 the Indian Parliament passed a bill for Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act (3). India has started to recognize the value of providing elderly with specialized healthcare treatments and several hospitals have established the geriatrics departments with comprehensive evaluations and treatments for the conditions such as arthritis, dementia, and cardiovascular diseases. The government has taken initiatives through Programs like the National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE) and the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents, and Senior Citizens Act aim to provide financial assistance for elderly healthcare services (4-7). However, there is a need for more focus on geriatric medicine to ensure health care professionals. Expanding specialized geriatric services to more hospitals, especially in rural areas, is crucial (8).

Geriatric assessment can be divided in following classes (9):

- Functional status
- Physical health: Vision impairment, hearing loss, nutrition status, fall prevention, urinary incontinence, osteoporosis and arthritis
- Polypharmacy and medication reconciliation
- Cognitive assessment: Dementia, sleep and insomnia, mood disorder

## 2. Advancement in geriatrics

- 2.1. Integrated programme for older person:** This program has been implemented to provide basic needs like shelter, food, medical care to elders with the help of government and non-government support. It includes mobile Medicare unit, day care centre for old person with dementia, and physiotherapy clinics.
- 2.2. Technological integration:** In India Technological advancements are transforming geriatric healthcare. Telemedicine is vital advancement, which helps elderly patients to consult with doctors remotely. It is beneficial in rural area where health care facilities are minimal (9). In future greater advancement in geriatrics for both healthcare providers and patients is needed. As in remote areas internet connectivity is expanding which ensures the affordability of digital health services (10).
- 2.3. Community-based programs:** Community health programs are diverting towards elders. Electronic health services are more developed. This provides regular check-ups, medication management and health education (11,12). Training to community health workers provides support in geriatric care. Such programmes are integrated with local health care facilities to increase the network in the area (13).
- 2.4. Training healthcare professionals:** In India, geriatric medicine is beginning to be taught in medical schools and training programs. Through this program, the future physicians, nurses, and caregivers will be better equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to handle the complex health requirements of the aged population (14,15). Geriatric care training is essential in all medical and nursing school and to update latest advancement in geriatric healthcare, professional development programs for health workers can be arranged (16).
- 2.5. Mental health focus:** Counselling, support group, psychiatric care is improving the mental health. The well-being of older persons can be further improved by educating healthcare professionals on how to identify and treat mental health disorders (17-19).
- 2.6. Research and innovation:** Indian researchers are contributing significantly to the global understanding of aging and age-related diseases. Research focused on geriatric health issues is leading to innovative treatments and interventions that improve health outcomes for older adults (20,21). Increased investment in geriatric research is essential. Establishing dedicated research centres and fostering collaborations with international institutions can accelerate the development of new strategies to enhance the quality of life for the elderly (22).
- 2.7. Promotion of social science in geriatric care:** To develop programs and policies that are appropriate for the Indian context, the government should support social science research in the subject of elder care. The demographics of India are changing, and our research, thinking, and the programs and policies that result from them should adapt accordingly.
- 2.8. Geriatric rehabilitation:** In hospital rehabilitation wards, skilled nursing facilities, home care or for ambulatory patient home based settings are helpful in rehabilitation. To plan different programmes for elders is very difficult task in our country due to diverse regional differences, and inter-individual variations.

## 3. Need or gaps in geriatrics health

In India there are following gaps:

- Vaccination for older people not included in national immunisation program.
- Availability of mobile health-care units and physiotherapy services.
- Separate facilities and palliative care homes for elderly with severe functional or cognitive impairment.
- Day-care centres, which can be used for group exercises, to provide nutritious meals, for recreational activities, development of new hobbies and for income generating activities.
- Help from NGOs and private health care institutions needed to cater to increasing elderly population.
- Programs related to elderly, usually don't take into account, the family or the caregiver.
- The coverage and utilisation of health care services in India vary with states.

In India, the gap between rural and urban area is huge. Rural population have poor availability and accessibility of geriatrics health care. These are more susceptible to communicable diseases as well as socioeconomic conditions (23).

## 4. Conclusion

India has the potential to develop a robust healthcare system that can handle the demands of an aging population by increasing the availability of specialized services, incorporating technology, improving community activities, developing healthcare professionals, and promoting supporting legislation. This development will provide healthcare in their latter stage of life and thereby enhancing the quality of life. Geriatric medicine is an emerging area, and government, health authorities, scientific institutes and scientific communities must fulfil the gap of geriatric medicine and care.

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## Innovations in Geriatric Drug Delivery

GG M B F G A H Q O D C B B Z J G Z O H  
WW M E S K A H U S W C H F X Z J B V M  
TF Q M O F P I V W K A O F X R N W G L  
FI D G H V M I N I T A B L E T I C X O  
WP H M B Q T V R B V L K O R S R T U X  
MZ N E G M E X F F L N E G E P T F D W  
DR H K I A B J J V T R E X O G F B O F  
FJ S C U O H D X J A J Z P G J A N P B  
PI W Q O F G P F N O O M C E D J Y S V  
DF P E A L I Y B P C B R Q L V R M R V  
DP B W S A B I I O D G D G P S X E V C  
ED A Z K C S E V Z E G N L I J L K C P  
TT B J U C P Z V H M D X S L Z E F S C  
VH U N H U I Q W I Q K I Z L V G L X J  
NP V Z H B T S O N N H Y L I B D O J V  
MO X D Q B W K M S G Z O Q G X I J K H  
BV Z U N I O W C K K B Z X M L U T H W  
BO A O B E L W N N W B K X Y L L L X B  
OM R Q D E H W K H M D T P L E F I B A  
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MEDCOAT  
XEREOGELPILL

PILLGLIDE  
FLUIDGEL

MINITABLET  
BUCCALFOAM

**Answers are on page 193**