Experts have raised doubts about the effectiveness of healthcare regulatory bodies in the country.
Sunset years clouded by neglect, crime, abuse

August 22 marks Senior Citizens Day. In India, perhaps across the world, life is lonely and difficult for the elderly. Luxurious retirement centres have begun to appear in and around the city, catering to the more affluent elderly who live here alone. The demand for nursing care is also on the rise, although this is both expensive and not up to par. While some hospitals do offer geriatric care, access to these facilities is always a challenge. Without a registry of senior citizens and social initiatives to ensure they are taken care of in every way, the senior citizen has a rough deal. Abuse is on the rise too, with more children resenting their ageing parents or trying to access their inheritance before time.

Alpana Thakor, Abhilash Matinam and Shweta Singh report

### June 21, 2023

#### forms of abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56%</td>
<td>Verbal abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>49%</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
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<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Economic exploitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
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#### Sunlight years clouded by neglect, crime, abuse

#### Ill, ageing with no place to go

As India ages, the nation’s senior citizens are facing a growing number of challenges, including neglect, crime, and abuse. The demand for nursing care is rising, but access to these facilities remains a challenge. While some hospitals do offer geriatric care, the quality is often not up to par.

#### increase in complaints registered against abusers

- 6% of the babies born in 2023 were born prematurely.
- 4% of the babies born in 2023 died from neglect.
- 3% of the babies born in 2023 died from abuse.
- 2% of the babies born in 2023 died from neglect and abuse.

#### Offspring perpetrators of abuse

- 7% of the offspring of the babies born in 2023 were perpetrators of abuse.
- 5% of the offspring of the babies born in 2023 were perpetrators of neglect.
- 3% of the offspring of the babies born in 2023 were perpetrators of neglect and abuse.

#### quotes

- "The older the person, the more likely they are to be victimized," said Dr. Ramajeet Singh, a geriatrician at the Central Institute of Geriatrics in Delhi.
- "Our system of elderly care is not fit for purpose," said Dr. Kamal Singh, a geriatrician at the Central Institute of Geriatrics in Delhi.

#### links

India’s prescription-based medicine dispensing has little relevance from regulatory perspective: Dr. Usha Manjunath

India spends only about 30 per cent of its healthcare budget towards primary healthcare. This is a fraction of what the US and the UK spend. Hence, it should spend more on primary healthcare and invest in human resources for regular inspections to check unlicensed prescribed prescriptions at pharmacies, Dr Manjunath told Pharmabiz.

The deteriorating public healthcare system in India means an increasingly larger percentage of its citizens are being driven to the private sector. Studies indicate most household health expenditures are out-of-pocket which is nearly 50 per cent. As per the Household Health Expenditures of India report released last December, nearly 21.61 per cent of out-of-pocket expenses relating to healthcare are spent on medicines, she said.

Often, a patient admitted to a hospital has to buy medicines and consumables from in-house pharmacy, thus allowing hospitals to earn huge profit margins. An institutional bulk purchase allows them to buy medicines and devices at a much lower rate than the MRP. The margins, the NPPA analysis showed, can be as high as 1,737 per cent, said Dr Manjunath.

In April 2018, Niti Aayog recommended the capping of trade margins of a total mark up through the trade channel of 24 per cent to all dealers, including stockists, wholesalers, distributors as hospitals for scheduled, essential drugs. The mark-up would be restricted to 30 per cent for non-scheduled drugs. Since India spends only a small part of its GDP on healthcare, unlike the developed countries where 4-5 per cent of GDP is the outlay, the
<table>
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<th>Website Name</th>
<th>Chronicle Pharmabiz</th>
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<td>Headline</td>
<td>Indian patients seem to be overpaying for healthcare and Ayushman Bharat is set to reduce costs: Dr. Usha Manjunath</td>
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Indian patients seem to be overpaying for healthcare and Ayushman Bharat is set to reduce costs: Dr Usha Manjunath

Nandita Vijay, Bengaluru  
Saturday, August 18, 2018, 08:00 Hrs (IST)

Indian patients are seen to be overpaying for healthcare. Now the Union government’s national health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat which will be rolled out from September 25 is geared towards reducing the financial burden in healthcare costs, said Dr Usha Manjunath, director, IIIMR, Bengaluru.

Healthcare financing in India is low. Recent years have seen many health insurance schemes and specifically the Ayushman Bharat or the Universal Health Coverage. But, the rates fixed by such schemes do not cover the cost of services at private hospitals. They may choose not to participate, thus limiting choices. But with the private sector is also brought within the ambit of the government programmes keeping ethos of partnerships in focus, she added.

Even ‘Jan Aushadhi’, a generic drug distribution scheme, aims to fix rates and mechanisms for redressals have not had a major impact on out-of-pocket expenses, Dr Manjunath told Pharmabiz.

The impact of the rising cost of healthcare has been greater in India as it’s a low-mid income country and sees a high proportion of out-of-pocket spend on healthcare. Further, India has the ‘double burden’ of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Infectious diseases continue to be high; complications from measles/diabetes among children, drug resistant TB and others like Malaria/HIV require attention. Diseases from pollution has also added to the burden. There is also an increased life expectancy.

“We also see a rapid inflation of expensive procedures into daily medical practice. The medical fraternity is eager for high-tech diagnostic tests. Competition, defensive medicine and patient demand/expectations drive the use of technology, pushing up spend. Many hospitals often costly, high-end care, prolonging life’, she said.

In India, most visit specialists instead of the ‘family physician’. There is a tendency to approach many doctors, including homeopaths and ayurvedic physicians, even faith healers in search of a cure and end up spending more. Most people seek care when diseases are in advanced stages, thus requiring expensive procedures. Moreover, the perception that private hospitals are better than government facilities pushes up ‘out of pocket’ expenses.