

Comprehensive Elderly Care Program, Chandrapur

Introduction

The Comprehensive Elderly Care Program is aim to build a comprehensive model that addresses the health, social, psycho-social and economic needs of the elderly in the community. This program comprises of two major interventions viz, health and social. Health intervention supports better accessibility of health services for elderly while social intervention supports the constant engagement of elderly through activity centers 'Mayechi Sawali' at village level.

Objectives

1. To develop elder friendly ecosystem within community and provide social as well as economic opportunities.
2. To link the elderly to better healthcare services.
3. To improve the quality of life of elderly by providing them a social platform at village level.

With coordination of District Health Society, Chandrapur, Gram panchayats and native communities, the Azim Premji Foundation and its partner organization Janseva Gramin Vikas va Shikshan Pratishthan jointly implementing this program in five blocks of Chandrapur district of Maharashtra namely Bhadravati, Ballarpur, Chandrapur, Mul and Sawali.

Operational definition

Elderly Activity Centre - A physical location that offers a planned program of activities, designed to promote the wellbeing through social and healthcare services.
Elderly/Senior citizens - persons aged 60 years and above.

Need of Activity Centre

In India nearly 75% of the senior citizens are residing in the rural areas. In the Indian tradition, especially in the rural areas, immediate family members were the providers of social security for the elderly. However, in the recent years, it has been observed that failure of agriculture had led the young generation in the rural areas to migrate to the nearby towns seeking jobs and as consequence senior citizens were left behind in the villages and they had to fend for themselves. Further the economic stress and poverty in the rural families have caused an attrition of the traditional care mechanism, especially

for elderly women. Various studies have shown that the geriatric population in India was financially insecure. Many elderly people were facing physical abuse and neglect, which was directly linked to gender and social support. Some were even abandoned by their family and were surviving only on meager pension received from the government.

One of the most important things an elder can do to remain happy and have a healthy long life is to engage with others on a regular basis, which not only helps them learn new things but also improve their overall quality of life.

Activity Centers

The Activity Centre provides an opportunity to the elders for active social engagement and healthy ageing. The goal is to provide a physical location for the elders where they can connect with the same age group people.

Elements

1. Routine activities
2. Recreational activities
3. Skill building
4. Health and social wellbeing

Setting up the Centers

It has to be ensured that the need for Activity Centre is properly established. The estimated number of the elderly people who would utilize these centers needs to be assessed in advance.

The necessary steps at the initial stages will include

1. An assessment of local needs and facilities in the area, in consultation with the Gram Panchayat, Community Volunteers and community Health workers.
2. Gram panchayat, health workers and community volunteers to undertake the planning of the center and its administration, financing, staffing and any new requirements.
3. Appointment of a team at the center which will comprise of Community volunteers, Community Health Workers like ASHA. Their prime responsibilities are to actively participate in conducting the activities in the centers.

4. Field Coordinators work towards strengthening and monitoring the functioning of the centers.
5. Along with the volunteers, active elderly members can be encouraged to form a small team for the up keep and mobilization of the members.
6. Regular meetings and training sessions also needs to be conducted.

The following activities to be conducted for the elders at the center

Recreational activities: These activities are planned with inclusive interests from the elderlies in the community. The self-participation is encouraged by ASHA and Cluster Coordinators.

1. Religious Prayers/ recitals
2. Bhajan/Kirtans
3. Folk songs and story telling
4. Arts and craft based activities

Health and Wellness: These activities are planned with coordination with District Health Society

1. Light physical exercises under the guidance of ASHA/ Cluster Coordinators. (Capacity building of the block Coordinators and volunteers has been undertaken by the Program Manager and other resource persons)
2. Yoga and Meditation
3. Memory Games
4. Health Check-up camps (Screening of Hypertension and Glucose level)
5. Supporting Geriatric Clinics at Primary Health Center & Sub-center level (once in a week)

Awareness sessions: These activities are undertaken in the presence of a professional. A talk, movie or a role plays are conducted to disseminate the information in an entertaining way.

1. Health awareness session - this includes common health problems among the elderly. Its preventive and or curative aspects are discussed and understood.

2. Mental health awareness - this includes identification of coping mechanism and mental conditions among elderly due to progressive age and social and financial issues
3. Awareness about social issues - this includes certain social issues like isolation, any form of abuse in the community or family towards elderly and certain ways to resolve them.
4. Awareness about social security schemes - this includes creating awareness of various pension schemes available for the elderly and information on documentations required to avail these schemes.
5. Once in a quarter, outings to parks and other holy places of interest can be arranged. This can be a family event.
6. Home visits by the field volunteers for home based elders to check on their health status and other requirements to be encouraged.

Process of enrolment of the Elders who will be utilizing the centers

1. A registration form needs to be filled in for every elderly participating in the center, it has to be maintained at the center which needs to capture the social, demographic and health issues of the member.
2. The Community volunteer's/health workers will be responsible for the registration process.
3. Attendance registers are maintained at the centers to analyze the average participation.