

## Hospitals plan holistic care for the elderly

Large hospitals are creating senior citizen clubs not just to address the illnesses of older people, but to promote wellness and health among them. The initiative helps large hospital chains clear apprehensions elderly population have about approaching them.

Fortis Healthcare has its Seniors First initiative, a card holder of which is entitled to privileged treatment in the group's hospitals. It intends to help out the senior citizen who lacks social support, especially when children work abroad.

The senior citizens have dedicated counter in the hospitals to finish the formalities, billing and admission quickly, they are given concession on treatment, including room-rent discounts. The staff is trained to listen and give special care to them. Home lab specimen collection is also available for them. The Seniors First initiative was rolled out in October 2013 and is currently available in Bangalore, Chennai and Gurgaon hospitals.

"We find that senior citizens are the most vulnerable group after their transition from being confident to self-doubting. They need special attention and emotional care," said Kartik Rajagopal, regional director, south, Fortis Healthcare. Around 12,000 people have availed the facility, which comes almost free of cost. According to him almost 35 per cent of Fortis' patients would be above 60 years of age.

Apollo Hospitals too has an initiative for senior citizens called "Neighbourhood Connect", which conducts community programmes to build awareness about the illness and wellness among the group. It also conducts regular health screening for the members. The initiative is operational in Bangalore and Chennai as an extension of the geriatric department of the group's hospitals.

"We started this to provide continual care to the elderly who are treated at the hospitals. In a city like Bangalore around 10 resident welfare associations and retired personnel associations are associated with us," said Anoop Amarnath, chief operating officer of Apollo Home Care.

According to him, senior citizens have a lot of apprehensions while approaching large tertiary hospital chains and the community initiative helps break the ice. "The hospitals too have to break the glasshouse and connect with the community," he said. Apollo is also in the process of associating with real estate developers who come up with retirement homes to provide geriatric care.

Nanavati Super Specialty hospital in Mumbai too has Live 360@60 club to help retired people make the most of their golden years.

"It intends to guide, assist, educate and engage its members on all matters of health - as well as keep them healthy and active through innovative wellness activities," said Dr. Rajendra Patankar, COO of Nanavati Super Speciality Hospital.

The club provides a Privilege Cost Card that the members could use and avail medical facilities at a discounted rate. Members would meet once a month to participate in games, exercises and talks on various topics. There would be indicative tests organised once a month.

According to a report by Singhi Advisors, in India there were 98 million elderly people in 2011 and this is expected to touch 200 million by 2018. This is the fastest growing demographic segment and affluent among them are finding care outside the family. The hospitals are trying to address this growing demand.