

Challenges of elderly caregiving

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This paper deals with the different challenges and choices regarding the quality of care of the elders in present situation. With increasing pace of modernization ,urbanization, migration and other factors detrimental to the care of the elderly by their adult children and elder care is going to be problematic in the coming decades. Therefore all the more relevant factors that influence quality care , need to be manipulated to promote better quality of caregiving. Knowledge about good caregiving would enable us to intervene and promote those factors that are critical to quality care giving.

Keywords: elderly, care giving, parenting

For the first time in history, people are living long enough to be a burden to their children. If your parents do not need help now, they will soon.....although they may not ask for it.

As people age they often become trail both physically and financially .Frequently they are widowed after long marriages and find themselves simply unable to cope with life on their own.Because of Alzheimers Disease and a wide variety of other medical problems associated with ageing, many of our old relatives can no longer cope with the ordinary demands of day to day living. They are susceptible to injury , accidents and depression. They are vigor and strength begin to erode into dependence and incompetence. There are two under lying issues for Featherstone and Hepworth (1993) which should be understood as the basis for understanding postmodern gerontology. Firstly , the tension exists between the external appearance of the body and face and functional

capabilities and the internal or subjective sense of experience of personal identity which is likely to become prominent as ageing travels through the life course. Secondly, older people are usually “fixed” to roles without resources which does not do justice to the richness of their individual experiences and multifacets of their personalities.

The aging population

Approximately , out of a world population of about 600 million elderly, about 230 million live in developed countries and the rest 60% are spread over in the developing countries. By 2050, the world's elderly population would grow to nearly 2000 millions of which the share of the developed countries would be about 400 million and the rest i.e. , 1600 millions would come from developing countries(Martin 1998,1991,Kinsella 1999)

Demographic Details Of The Elderly- The World And Asia

No	Region	Elderly (in Millions)		Total	Percent of popn.		Percent of Widowed		Support Ratio e60	
		1999	2050		1999	2050	Men	Women	1999	Men
1	World	593.11	1969.81	10.0	22.0	21.0	57.0	9.0	17	20
2	Developed Countries	228.10	375.00	19.0	33.0	20.0	57.0	5.0	18	223
3	Developing countries	395.3	1774.48	6.5	16.5	18.8	59.0	15.0	15	16
4	Developing countries in Asia	292.20	1193.71	7.00	22.0	18.5	56.5	12.3	16.8	19.2

SOURCE: Population Aging - United Nation- 1999 & U.S Bureau of the Census, International Statistical Programme Center 1999

It has become the baby-broom generations latest and in some ways most agonizing life crisis what to do when the parent who once took care of you can no longer take care of themselves. We are having to take care of our aging parents. More people are living longer. Unfortunately, that does not mean that they are healthier. May be it is the medications and procedures that help to keep our parents alive.

The caregiver

If you are not currently caring for an elder, chances are that you will at some time during your life. Care giving can be defined as providing un-paid assistance for the physical and emotional needs of another person, ranging from partial assistance to 24 hour care, depending on his or her condition. Caregivers can provide wide range of services, depending on the degree of disability, economic situation and living

environment of the older person. The type and amount of care will also vary with the type of diseases or disability .For example some one with Alzheimer's disease will have different needs than someone with liver problems.

Family members provide approximately 80 % of the necessary care for the elderly. IF you are the oldest daughter or the child, who lives closest to your parents, chances are you will be the first to care givers tend to be and the secondary care givers tend to be the son-in-law and the grand children. While secondary care givers are usually family members, they can also be friends and non relatives. Secondary care givers tend to be less involved in personal care of the elder but help with transportation, shopping and home repairs.

It is an act of love

Caregiving is viewed as a delicate relationship between the care giver and care receiver.A large number of studies on various aspects of caregiving relationship have been reported in the western literature (e.g., Brody & Schoonover, 1986; Cicirelli, 1981, Johnson,

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1983; Horowitz, 1985.) very few studies have been carried out on this aspect in India (Jammuna,1987, 1991,1993; Jamuna & Ramamurti,1994)

In India though there have been social transition & migration, still the grand parents , parent & child constitute an extended family in most cases. Care to elders is a feminine role in Indian culture. In the past the unmarried daughter was expected to provide care for an aging parents. Approximately 2 million women are part of the sandwich generation, caring for children and parents simultaneously. The working women who is also an elderly caregiver doubles up on her responsibilities and cuts back on her personal leisure time to fit everything in it.

Concern of the family

The need to provide care for an elder can happen suddenly or it can developed slowly. Your previously independent mother can fall and break her hip , your father's diminishing eyesight can make it dangerous for him to continue to drive alone. In these case usually that there is one primary caregiver and most often this is an adult daughter or spouse. A major step towards family problem is for everyone to recognize that the caregiving responsibilities belong to all family members. Each person can do something even if he or she lives at a distance . The caregiving decisions that are made should focus on your elders needs, perception & preferences.

Feelings experienced by a caregiver

Though most of the caregivers are willingly choose to play a primary role in the care of their loved one , this role often carries with it conflicting emotions that must be deal with. Some of them are.....

- *Sadness and grief:* Knowing that a person is in declining health and seeing it happen before your eyes can be difficult. Knowing that your mother, grandmother, sister & husband has a short time to live may cause you to begin grieving even before they die. Sometimes your parents reach at a point when no decision you make will be satisfactory to him or her. If they have already a habit of disapproving your action, it will be an even tougher path.
- *Fear and worry:* Those of you who are taking care of someone in declining health may be plagued by fears. What will the future hold? What if mother needs more care than I can give them? How do I get extra help? Will I have to quit? and etc.

Whether you offer occasional help and support or must fully manage your parents affairs, whether your parents live miles away or move in with you, whether the aging process is just beginning to create problems or is nearing the final phase etc. are the facts which give worries to caregivers.

- *Anger* Illness can affect people differently and some elderly persons may lash out at their loved ones out of their own fear, frustration and growing dependency. The caregiver need to deal with her own anger, anger at the care receiver , at family members who are not helping out or at the doctors.
- *Guilt:* The feelings of guilt affect the caregiver for which he feel guilty about many things including guilt for not dealing enough to change the situation , or can not doing anything to make the person happier, guilt for becoming angry with the ill person, doctors, relatives and etc. for neglecting one's own spouse, children and other responsibilities. Sometimes the caregiver may even feel guilty for enjoying time away from the loved one.
- *Fatigue:* Caring a person continuously who is in ill health, dealing

with the night time wandering for the patient, caring for two households, and being stretched in several directions can lead to fatigue. In addition, when the major sleeping time of caregiver interrupted regularly, it can lead to serious exhaustion.

- *Isolation:* It is said that the aging process causes the parents to become the child and vice versa. The person you are caring for, might need constant watch and not want to be left alone. So caregivers experience a significant reduction in the amount of free time they have. If you are the person primarily responsible for another care, you may feel tied down and isolated . you may feel that no one understands your situation or how you are feeling.

Taking care of yourself

What might not be so readily available is how to take care of yourself while you are caring for an elderly parent. We tend to forget about ourselves. We might be very concerned about whether a parent is eating properly, yet skip a meal , so we rush to run and errand for them. We will call a the doctor for a sleep medicine for father, because we know how important a good night's sleep is, yet fail to safeguard our own sleep time. So an important part of being a successful caregiver is remembering to take care of yourself. To provide effective care you need to maintain your own health . Neglecting yourself can have long term consequences, not only for you but for the person who needs your care .

Adequate sleep and exercise plus nutritious meals , are essential to your own well-being . Helping an elderly person should not mean giving up all of your activities and relationships with other people. Give yourself a break from your care giving activities by getting outside help.

Hire someone to stay with your elderly relative so that you can go out for lunch , go shopping or see a movie. Perhaps a friend or another family member can take over for a while.

You may need to set limits on what you will do , difficult as this may seem. You can not be expected to do it all. Other family members can a contribution.

Sometimes organized support groups are helpful in dealing with the stress of caregiving. Attending an elder care support group can give you a chance to share openly with other caregivers and to gain new ideas to manage your situation. It is very important to have someone you can confide in and with whom you can share your true feelings.

Conclusion

There was considerable ambivalence about the strain of living with an elderly parent. Although most felt the task of caring was manageable, all agreed that it was demanding and stressful. Children are motivated by a strong sense of duty, yet the arrangement often places family relationships under severe strain. According to research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, residential or nursing care is virtually a taboo topic that neither the children nor their parents are willing to discuss. Ideally, it would be better to plan ahead, before the crisis occurs. While it is difficult to talk about, find out what kind of care your elders might choose before they become ill or incapacitated. Good advance planning can help bring of mind to you and your loved ones as you face this milestone in your lives together.

No public or private social service agency can attend to these problems in the depth and complexity you need. So it is up to the children of aging parents to return some of the goodwill, consideration, guidance and nurturing we once received.

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