

2018



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Happy New Year



NEWSLETTER
FROM CARE FINDER



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CELEBRATE YOUR SILVER YEARS



The News Team from @Care and the Team of Care Finder wishes all our readers a very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year!

I am overwhelmed at the positive feedback and responses we have been getting over the past two months from you. We thank you for your encouragement. This issue of @Care will focus on a topic that most of our readers wanted us to write about. With the curtains drawing to a close on 2017 and the new beginning of 2018 awaits to welcome us, we will be discussing on health especially mental health.

A small sign board at the Cubbon Park, Bengaluru caught my eye. It read, 'Talk health. Talk mental health.' The message was displayed on a sign board that was less than 2 X 1 feet. I am not sure how many would have even noticed such a small board, but it struck a chord on me. I was happy to note that the Bengaluru Corporation had touched upon a topic that is so important and needs public awareness. I only wished that it was displayed in a more prominent location in a larger size, so that it would appeal to every passerby, driving home the message to a larger audience.

@Care: Mental health is not an embarrassment or social stigma anymore!

In an inclusive society, people are empathetic and understanding. Organizations like SCARF, Nightingales, ARDSI have been contributing significantly to create awareness. Reversal of Alzheimer's or Dementia is extremely rare. Addressing the patient's needs in time, can significantly delay the degeneration process.

Bengaluru Corporation has taken a positive step. Let's applaud them. Every little step taken in the right direction will have a direct and meaningful impact on the society. It is our responsibility to create and spread awareness on mental health and the need for people to discuss it. Mental health should be one of the focus areas of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities that are carried out by most organisations.

At Care Finder, it is our endeavour to enhance the quality of lives of (y)our loved ones. When you come to us with a challenge, we offer you the right solution.

Send us your inputs and suggestions. Write to us! Your questions will help us address issues that will benefit a number of people.

This New Year let us all take a resolution that we will **'Make a Difference'** to someone's life. Do it and experience how it will **'Make a Difference'** to (y)ours!

Our Heartfelt Wishes for a very Happy, Healthy and Memorable 2018!

P.S. Srikumar

Editor

@Carefinder

People do forget at times and it is very common. Is forgetfulness dementia? Yes and No - because forgetting small tasks does not imply that a person is affected with dementia. However, when this forgetfulness becomes more pronounced or regular, there is a possibility that the person has been affected with Dementia.

In this edition of @Care, we will help you understand what Dementia is. Then we will discuss about Alzheimer's and try helping you understand the difference between the two.

What Is Dementia?

Dementia is not a disease; it is a syndrome. For those wondering what the difference might be - A group of symptoms that do not have a clear and defined identification is called syndrome, whereas diseases are better defined, classified and identified. When some symptoms affect the cognitive ability of people, it is called dementia.

Dementia can impact people in different ways. Listed below are some of those...

- ▶ Memory – makes a person forget even the most simple of things such as names, people, addresses, etc.
- ▶ Reasoning – impacts the ability to make simple decisions
- ▶ Everyday routine – impacts the ability to perform day to day activities such as brushing, using the toilet, eating, etc.
- ▶ Communication – impacts the ability to communicate clearly. E.g. they might ask the same question over and over again or may not be able to answer a question posed.

Though dementia is mostly seen in older adults, it can also affect people belonging to a much lesser age group. Yes, it is true that it is common among the elderly, but it is a myth that it only affects elders.

Dementia is a subtle syndrome. It begins with forgetfulness but as it progresses it severely impacts the person, so much that remembering even the simplest of tasks can be a Herculean challenge! When it hits a peak, the affected may totally lose the ability to care for themselves. From forgetting what they ate for lunch, to where they live or how to have a bath, the everyday routine goes for a toss.

Hence, it is no surprise that dementia is one of the significant causes of disability in senior citizens. It places an untold burden on all those near and dear to the affected individual. The load is both emotional and financial for families and caregivers.

What Causes Dementia?

As we made it clear, Dementia doesn't affect just the elderly, they are more susceptible to it. Dementia is mostly a result of damaged brain cells. Though there are many reasons that can cause brain cell damage, the most popularly prevalent among the senior community is through degenerative diseases.

So, what's a degenerative disease – it is the name given to those diseases that are caused by the decline and death of nervous system cells (neurons). Degenerative diseases are progressive; it means that the condition worsens over time. Some popular degenerative diseases are:

- Alzheimer's
- Parkinson's
- Huntington's

Each of the above-mentioned affects the brain cells. Each of them causes damage to a different type of brain cells. About 50 to 70% of all cases of dementia are caused by Alzheimer's disease.

Some other reasons that dementia may affect a person are:

- ▶ Chronic drug use
- ▶ Infections – e.g. HIV,
- ▶ Stroke
- ▶ Vascular diseases – disease affecting arteries, veins and capillaries that carry blood to and from the heart.
- ▶ Depression

As of today, there is no cure for dementia. The damage to brain cells is irreversible. If the condition is diagnosed in a person over 80 years of age, the time from the point of diagnosis to demise can be as short as just 3 years.

However, with the right care, the inevitable can be pushed a little further. This gives the affected elder more opportunity to live a healthy life. People affected with dementia require undue attention; hence, it is recommended that they are under the direct care of a caregiver or a health aide. In its most advanced stage, we recommend shifting the elder into an assisted living community that offers the best comfort and care.

What Are The Traits Of Dementia?

The reason dementia and other mental health issues have created a havoc is the lack of awareness. Since the most common and the first symptom of dementia is forgetfulness, people tend to ignore it. They are not aware that such a negligible symptom can be the seed for such a life-impacting condition. It is very easy to overlook these symptoms that are inherent in elders, but it becomes imperative to know and understand, what those are and how it impacts.

The first set of symptoms would be – **loss of time and loss of surrounding**. An elder with dementia will forget their way even in a place where they have worked or lived for decades. They will also have trouble keeping track of time.

Keep in mind that in our busy lives with so much to do; we all tend to forget things from time to time. **Just memory loss alone isn't dementia**. There is a paradigm difference between forgetting once in awhile and forgetfulness as a condition.

Look out for these Red Flags in Seniors

- Unable to remember people, like a grandchild or a family friend.
- Forgetting how to reach their home from a marketplace or how to switch on the TV – unable to remember how to do everyday tasks. This is the first symptom of the condition.
- Unable to retain or understand normal things and information like a meeting planned for Thursday, no idea of a commitment given, no recollection of something that was discussed, etc.
- In an advanced stage of dementia, the behaviour of the elder person can become depressed and aggressive.

Even if one of the above given is inherent, it is highly recommended that the affected elder is given immediate medical attention and care.

Case Study:

Mrs. Sharma had lived in the same house, which was her abode for more than forty years. Every Tuesday she would visit the same temple at the same time. It was a religious ritual for her. Since the temple was close by, she used to walk there. On a random Tuesday, she called her daughter, harried and hassled, asking how to reach home. She could not remember the way from the temple, the same path she had walked for over 40 years!

Thankfully, the daughter was a scientist, an informed person. She saw the episode as a possibility of dementia and sought proper medical attention for her mother immediately.

There may be many Mrs.Sharmas out there who probably even forget to call their kids! It is imperative that forgetful elders are watched closely and are under the care of someone to ensure that all bases are covered.

What Is Alzheimer's?

As said above, 50 to 70% of all cases of dementia are caused by Alzheimer's. It is a progressive disease of the brain. It slowly causes harm to memory and cognitive functions. At the moment, there is no known cure for it, hence it is a terminal condition. Alzheimer's has three stages, and the length of each phase varies for different people. On an average, people affected by Alzheimer's can live with the condition for anywhere between 4 to 8 years, though some have gone beyond the ordinary and have lived for 20 years.

What Causes Alzheimer's?

The main reason for the condition is damage to brain cells. It is referred to as **the Hidden Killer** because the damage to the brain begins long before the first symptom appears.

How does this damage the cells? Abnormal protein begins to deposit on the brain cells. These form a structure that we call plaques and tangles. These structures cause the connection between two cells to break. This breakage causes the death of the cells.

Think of it as a collective wire connection. If you destroy a part of the wire, it will slowly break away from the rest of it as the damage increases. This would lead to the entire connection not function properly. Alzheimer's affects the brain in a very similar manner so much so that in the most advanced stage one can see a major shrinkage in the brain size.

What Are The Symptoms Of Alzheimer's?

One cannot diagnose Alzheimer's. The only way to be 100% sure a person suffers from it is by examining a brain cell under the microscope. This can only be done during an autopsy. However, with the advancement in science and knowledge, has given us hope. An expert or a specialist in Alzheimer's can accurately diagnose the condition in almost 90% cases.

One should still look out for these Symptoms to Check whether the elder can be impacted by Alzheimer's:

- Depression
- Impaired judgement
- Disorientation
- Confusion
- Changes in behaviour
- Difficulty in speaking, swallowing or even walking – this happens in advanced stages of the condition

Dementia and Alzheimer's Are Different – Here is How

The two mental health conditions may look similar, but in reality they are not. The easiest way to differentiate between the two is to think of Dementia as a house and Alzheimer's as one of the persons who live in the house.

Dementia is an umbrella term used to denote a group of symptoms that affect the mental capability of a person, e.g., memory. Alzheimer's falls under dementia. It is one of the reasons that can cause dementia.

Alzheimer's is a disease while dementia is a syndrome. One cannot treat Alzheimer's, but some cases of dementia can be addressed. Not all cases of dementia are progressive meaning they do not worsen over time while every case of Alzheimer's is progressive.

Caregivers usually work on intuitions on what to do when dealing with elders and their conditions. However, when it comes to Dementia, the opposite of this is what works! Do the opposite of what your intuition says! Confusing isn't it?! That's how it is by the way! Hence, it is always recommended that caregivers be given psychological counselling. The task of taking absolute care of someone who is slowly devolving can be a little taxing both mentally and physically. Counselling sessions and guidance becomes helps in countering these challenges.

The case of Ms. Kamala – Kamala, called us one day and wished to have a private conversation. She broke down on the very first hello. Her grievance was that every day she would prepare a proper diet for her father-in-law and ensure that he eats it. Every day the father-in-law would complain to her husband that Kamala had not fed him. This seemingly domestic issue sparked a lot of arguments between the husband and wife, invariably breaking the soul of Kamala.

We asked Ms. Kamala and her husband to attend a counselling session with us. It did take a few sessions, but now the husband was able to see from Ms. Kamala's point of view. Hallucination is one of the problems related to dementia. What the father-in-law saw as not being fed was actually a symptom of dementia!

Care for the Caregiver

This is why we say that a caregiver should be given as much support and therapy as possible. Their perspective needs to be heard and they need a platform where their concerns and issues while handling dementia impacted seniors are addressed.

One issue that many Dementia caregivers have brought to our notice is the constant packing and unpacking by affected persons. If you are a custodian of an elder who has dementia and does the same, we advise you not to confront them. Allow them to pack or unpack if they want to; just sit with them through this process!

Another issue during an advanced stage is **discarding of clothing**. New caregivers rarely know that it is a common problem with dementia patients- removing clothes that they are wearing. A session with a veteran caregiver or specialist can inform the new caregiver of such stages. They can have a better understanding of what is to come and how to handle it.

When In Doubt, Ask. Clarify.

If you are a custodian of a dementia patient, we urge you to talk. Please do not hesitate. We can assure you, what you face has been faced by many others. Talking will help you feel better; it will teach you how to take better care. There are organizations like SCARF, Nightingales, Dementia Society, etc., who can help you. They play an essential role bridging this need for communication. As experts, they are sure to give you solutions that you would have overlooked or would not have given a thought at all.

Recently, we referred Ms. Kamala, to one of these organisations. The day-care centre would take care of her father-in-law, while she could focus on her children and her passion for music. This kept her well balanced to take care of her father in law in the evenings. This is the change an assisted living home, support or counselling can bring to a caregiver's life. Ask for help, and people will answer.



Dementia Kit

If you are a caregiver for an elder with dementia, then a Care Kit is a must-have for you. A Dementia Care Kit is an ensemble of products that help an older adult suffering from the syndrome. Each item in the kit is to make life easier and simple for the patient considering the safety of the individual as the utmost concern.

Brain Refreshers:

- ▶ **Day and Date Calendar:** Keep a bold day and date calendar which will remind the patient on the day and date. This is something that they tend to easily forget.
- ▶ **Tic-Tac-Toe:** This is a game that many of us have played as children. It improves hand dexterity in elderly and arthritic individuals and also keeps the brain active.
- ▶ **Lace Game Board:** Lace board games improve dexterity, mobility and fine or gross motor skills.
- ▶ **Wooden Stacking Ring:** The ring enhances hand and eye co-ordination and improves memory.
- ▶ **Abacus:** Helps Alzheimer's patients to develop a pictorial representation of the problem in the brain.

Handy Help:

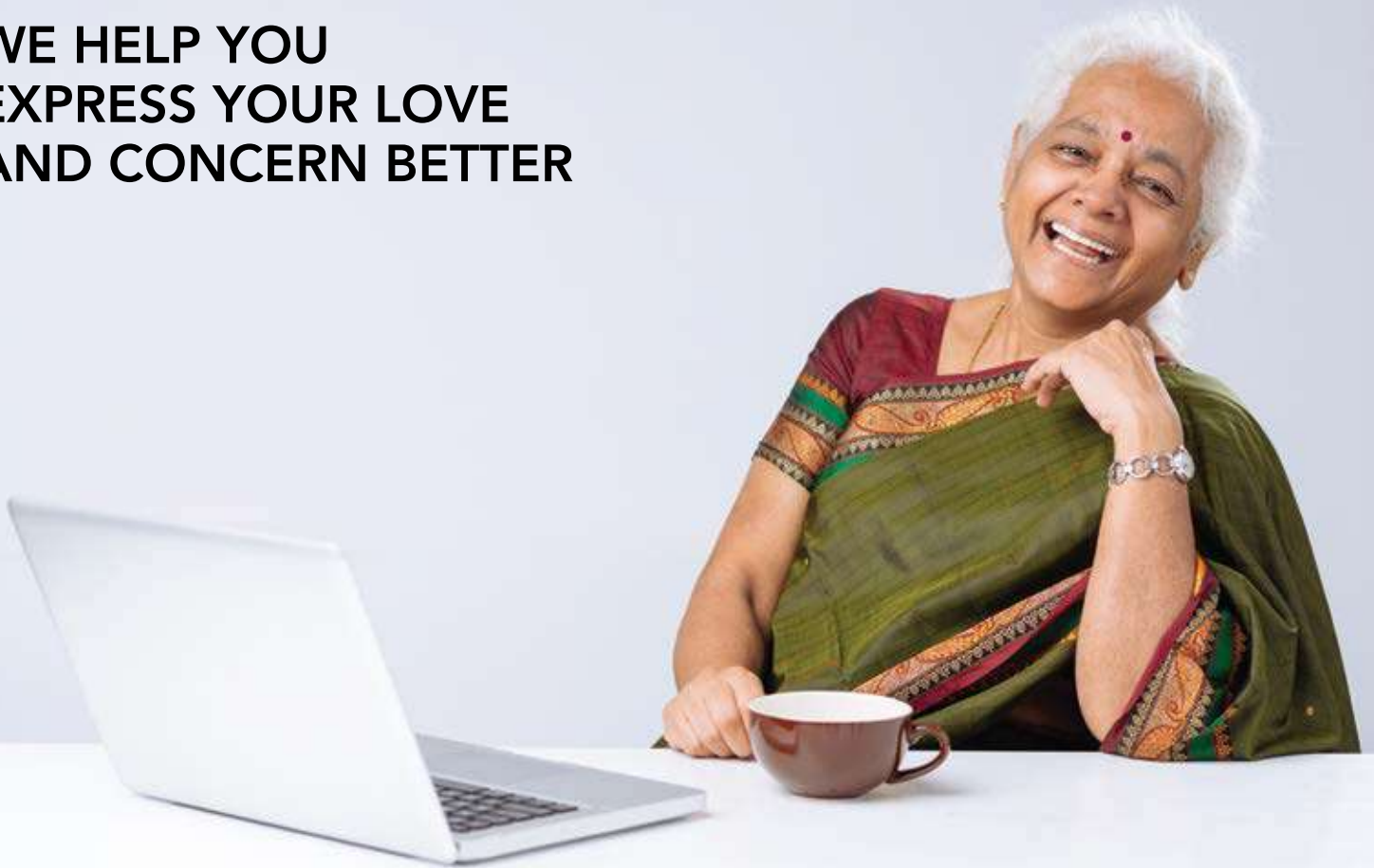
- **Family Albums:** This is one of the most appreciated gifts. It creates a sense of timeline, thereby giving them an opportunity to visit past memories as well as connect with recent events and people who are currently part of their lives.
- **Picture Phone Software:** Has photos of family and caregivers with easy call buttons on the phone.
- **Scoop Plate:** Researchers found that an Alzheimer's patient who eats from red coloured plates consume 25 % more food than those eating in white colour plates.
- **Pill Cutter, Crusher and Storage:** Cuts the medication down to easier to swallow size or crushes it into a finer consistency. The pills can be stored in the container.
- **Caregiver Handbook:** Contains details about symptoms, signs, prevention, facts, nutritional lifestyles and food.

Patient Safety:

- ➔ **Stop Signs:** These are a must for loved ones who wander within or away from house or building. Stop signs orient the individual not to go further than that.
- ➔ **GPS Tracker:** Extremely useful for patient who has the tendency to walk away. Using this, a patient can be monitored from remote locations.
- ➔ **Signs on Bathrooms:** One of the most common issues for a Dementia patient is to control the bladder and the difficulty they face in identifying the restroom. Paint the bathroom doors with a different color and add a 'Prominent' sign before the restroom. It is also very common that the patient gets confused and locks themselves inside. Either remove the locking facility from inside a bathroom or have a system in which you will be able to open the bathroom door from outside even if they lock themselves up.
- ➔ **Paint Walls & Doors Differently:** Patients forget walls and doors, it is important for the door to be in an alternative bold color, clearly indicating that it is different from the wall.

Please mail us if you require any further details on any of these products. We will be happy to connect you to the manufacturers.

WE HELP YOU EXPRESS YOUR LOVE AND CONCERN BETTER



ABOUT CARE FINDER

One of the most worrying aspects of having aged loved ones living alone is the process of finding the right care providers. This task is often difficult, as many factors have to be taken into consideration, chief of which is safety. Care Finder was begun to remedy this situation. We make it easy for you to make important decisions by presenting all the vital information that will be required to do so.


You can relax by accepting the specialised services offered by Care Finder. Be it healthcare professionals, documentation experts, property management consultants, etc., we boast of an exhaustive network of the best service providers, who excel in their area of expertise, and specifically cater to the needs of the elderly. With our help, you can discover a storehouse of customised services for senior citizens. We help the elderly explore new opportunities, learn and pick up new skills through our wide range of programs.

When you want the best for your parents, come to Care Finder.

Peace Of Mind- Guaranteed!

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