

Exploring Elder Care in Different Settings in West Bengal: A Psycho-Social Study of Private Homes, Hospitals and Long-Term Care Facilities

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Abstract : West Bengal, one of the most rapidly ageing states in India, has inadequate structure for elder care. Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve elder care which involves focusing on different care settings where the elderly exists, like - Homes, Hospitals and Long-Term Care facilities (e.g. - Old Age Homes, Hospices). The study explores various elder care settings, with the intention to develop an understanding about them, and thereby generate comprehensive information about the entire spectrum of elder care in Kolkata. Empirical data are collected from the elderly and their caregivers in different settings. The tools for data collection are narratives, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, along with field observations. Mixed method design is adopted to analyze the complexities of elder care in different set ups. The major challenges of elder care in private Homes are: architecturally inadequate housing conditions, paucity of financial support and scarcity of skilled caregivers. While the key factors preventing the Hospital and Long-Term Care Facilities from providing elder care services are inadequate policies and set governmental standards for elder care for the hospitalized elderly in various departments of the Hospital and the elderly residing in different kinds of Long Term Care Facilities. The limitations in each care setting results in considerable neglect and abuse of the elderly. The major challenges in elder care in West Bengal are lack of continuum between different care settings/ peripheral location of private Homes within public health framework and inadequate state Palliative policy- including narcotic regulations. The study suggests remedial measures to improve the capacity to deliver elder care in different settings.

Keywords : elder care settings, family caregiver, home care, geriatric hospital care, long term care facility

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