

The demand for aged care services on account of the ever increasing diversity of the population in Australia is an accepted fact. The number of migrants from the Asian countries has increased and along with that increase there is also a corresponding increase in the category of aged persons within these families. There are a number of factors which are of particular concern to the aged persons who are currently living with the families of their children who come from Asian and African countries. For many of these aged the preferential mode of living is likely to remain the same because the alternative of living independently or in residential care is unlikely to be a preferred option of the current cohort.

There are a number of concerns that need our attention because the issues that are likely to arise with the aged persons living with the children are unlikely to be discussed in the public domain for reasons which are cultural.

Issues and Concerns

1. The aged persons are reticent to raise issues with outside support services for fear of emotional reprisals from their children, or because of a genuine desire not to hurt their feelings. It is also the case that the mere fact of being allowed to live with the children is considered an imposition on the children for which they should never be ungrateful. To demand services from outside sources is to suggest neglect by their own children and therefore the aged are likely to go without essential support or suffer in silence.
2. In many of the families the aged persons are on their own the entire day without any adult contact until the family members return from work. In most families the norm is for both parents to work. Though the aged parent(s) may act as minders for school going children the needs and concerns of the aged parents rarely come up. The fact that the aged grandparents are with their children is in reality a life alone for many of these people. As Asian parents get older the worst nightmare is to live alone- an existence to which they are not used to. The role of volunteers from the community of the aged parents is becoming increasingly important.
3. Without outside support services the aged parents can miss out on the age related dietary and medicinal or ambulatory supplements unless the informal carers are properly reminded of and also supervised. The coordination of formal community care services including the informal family carers is a must.
4. Another likely issue is the use of the aged parents income and wealth primarily for meeting the needs of the parents rather than as a supplementary income for the family.

Remedial measures

It is absolutely essential for the support workers to be mindful of the qualitative aspects of the aged person's daily life and communicate the concerns to the informal carers. That they have to play a proactive role needs emphasis. It must be stressed in the recruitment and training of the workforce including low intensity care. This has to be followed up and if necessary the network of carers and the GP dialogue must be activated in the resolution of these issues. While there can be a number of providers of care for older people living in the family environment the coordination of the information plus action network has a bigger role to play