

*Editorial*

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## **Geriatrics — A New Horizon In The Medical Sciences**

The term Geriatrics – a Greek word is a combination of Geron means ‘Old man’ and Iatros means ‘Heaven’. Hence Geriatrics or Geriatric medicine or medical Gerontology in a speciality that takes care of the health of elderly people; and the physicians who got specialised in this subject are called Geriatrician or Geriatric physicians.

Man born to die, crossing the different stages in life journey like baby crawls to child, child jumps as boy who becomes young in time to reach the stage of pre old then old and ultimately very old one. With the progress of civilisation and advent of modern medical facilities, consciousness of the humanity regarding food and life style, life expectancy throughout the world in increased to the maximum and still increasing. People in Minnesota live the longest in United States average 78.7 years and the oldest verified man in the world Massazo Nonoka of Japan is of 113 years old but he left us for heavenly abode a few months back.

Who are called older people or Geriatrics? Above 65 years is often called the older people but most people do not need geriatric care until the age of 70 or 75 years. It is the study of aging including biological, biochemical, sociological and psychological changes of the older age groups. Life expectancy of an additional 17 years at the age of 65 years, additional 10 years at the age 75 years for men; and 20 years at 65 years of age, 13 years at the age of 75 years for women are desirable after geriatric care. Overall women live 05 years longer than men, probably because of genetic, biologic and environmental factors.

In contrast to common belief that the management of the fragile age to be done by the different specialities as per need like Cardiologist, Palmologist, Orthopadicians, Eye specialist, Psychologist, Dentist etc, this group of old aged to be tackled by a separate specialist – the Geriatric Physician like the Paediatricians who treat the children only.

### *History :*

In the medieval Islamic world, several physicians wrote on issues related to Gerontology. The Canos Medicine (1025) offered instruction for care of aged including diet and problems like constipation. Arabic physician Ibu Al Jazzen wrote on the aches and the conditions of elderly. His scholarly work covers sleep disorder, forgetfulness and to combat the causes of mortality. Some early pioneers such as Michel Eugene Chevreul who himself lived up to 102 years believed that aging itself should be a science to be studied and Elie Metchnikoff coined the term Gerontology in 1903. Modern pioneers like James Baren began organising Gerontology as its own field in 1940's, (later in starting U.S. Government started a course on Ageing in the University of Southern California and University of California, Los Angeles). He established Gerontological society of America in 1940.

Population over 60 years in expected to be more than 22% of the world population by 2050. The term geroscience emerge in the 21st century. In 1900 there were 3.1 million people aged 65 years and more living in U.S., but now it has reached 31.1, 35, and 43 million in 1990, 2000 and 2010. When total population increased 9.7% in 2000 to 2010, then persons of old and older age increased by 15.1% during the same period. It is predicted that by 2050 the number of old aged will be greater than number of children aged 0 to 14 years in U.S.

### *Geriatric Care Management :*

It is the process of planning and co-ordinating care of the elderly with physical and/or mental impairment to meet their long term care need, improvement of quality of life and to maintain their independence as long as possible. Geriatric care managers accomplish this by combining a working knowledge of health and psychology, human development, family dynamics, public and private resources as well as funding resources, while advocating for their clients throughout the continuum of care.

### *Difference between Adult and Geriatric Medicine :*

Geriatrics focuses on unique need of elderly persons as during old age decline of the various organ system manifests. For example, renal impairment may be a part of aging but enlarged prostate, renal failure and incontinence are not.

### *Geriatric Giants :*

These are major categories of impairment that appear in elderly immobility, instability, in continence, impaired intellect/ memory, impaired vision and hearing loss etc.

Old one suffers from many age related ailments, which are tackled by different kind of specialists.

#### **A. Medical :**

- (1) Carcinogenic
- (2) Geriatric dentistry
- (3) Diagnostic imaging
- (4) Geriatric emergency medicine
- (5) Geriatric nephrology
- (6) Geriatric nephrology
- (7) Geriatric oncology
- (8) Geriatric pharmacotherapy
- (9) Geriatric psychiatry
- (10) Public health - Disease prevention and health promotion in elderly
- (11) Geriatric rehabilitation
- (12) Geriatric haematology
- (13) Geriatric sexology
- (14) Subspecialty –
- (I) **Assessment clinic**
- (II) **Fall and balance clinic**

### **(III) Pain clinic**

#### **B. Surgical :**

- (1) Ortho geriatrics
- (2) Geriatric cardiothoracic surgery
- (3) Geriatrics Urology
- (4) Geriatrics ortorynnology
- (5) Geriatric general surgery
- (6) Geriatric ophthalmology
- (7) Geriatric anaesthesia
- (8) Geriatric intensive care unit
- (9) Geriatric nutrition and nursing
- (10) Geriatric occupational therapy
- (11) Geriatric podicity
- (12) Geriatric physical therapy
- (13) Geriatric speech and language therapy
- (14) Geriatric mental health
- (15) Geriatric audiology

### *Geriatric Training :*

**USA -** In USA Geriatricians are primary care physician – D.O. or MD, who are board certified either in family medicine or internal medicine and have certificates of added qualification (CAS) in Geriatric Medicine.

**U.K. -** In U.K. it is now a distinct clinical entity and has been integrated as a specialisation of General medicine since last 1978s. In contrast to U.S. it is a major speciality in U.K.

**CANADA –** In Canada there are two paths to become a Geriatric Physician.

1. A Doctor of Medicine (M.D) – after completion of 3 years internal medicine residency training have to undergo 2 years specialised Geriatric residency training in Royal College of physician and surgeon of Canada to become Geriatric Physician.

2. A Doctor of Medicine opted for 2 years residency programme in family medicine and then complete 1 year enhanced skilled programme in the care of elderly by college of family physician in Canada to become a Geriatric physician.

**INDIA –** In India, Geriatrics is a new speciality offering 3 years post graduate residency M.D. training after completion of 5.5 years under graduate training of M.B.B.S. Unfortunately only four institutions promotes M.D. in Geriatric Medicine.