

## Social and Cultural Norms; Still a Resistance to Nursing Care Homes for Older Patients in KPK, Pakistan

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**Abstract:** The percentage of the elderly population is increasing worldwide. The same trend is also observed in Pakistan. The elderly face many health problems in their advanced age. Elderly those who have chronic conditions like stroke need special and long-term care. So, for the provision of long-term care nursing care homes are crucial in a community. But, unfortunately in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there is strong resistance to nursing care homes due to cultural and social norms.

**Keywords:** Social, Cultural, Norms, Resistance, Elderly care, Nursing homes.

### INTRODUCTION

The elderly population is growing all over the world, and the same trend is also observed in Pakistan. In 1998 WHO report stated that the elderly population of Pakistan is almost 6% of the total population, and this will double by 2025 [1]. With aging, the number of chronic diseases and disabilities also increases, which affect the quality of life of these population [2]. Caring for the elderly who has a chronic disease like stroke is a very challenging and difficult task for the family. These patients need assistance in performing their daily activities like bathing, feeding, positioning, urination, etc. Most of the time the family members do not provide the appropriate care due to insufficient knowledge of nursing care. As the elderly reported in a nursing home that they have not provided the appropriate physical, psychological and financial support from family, so they decided to live in a nursing care home [3]. Although, the nursing care home is very important in a community for severely elderly ill patients to prevent them from health-related complications, but there is strong resistance to it in many communities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan.

### SCENARIO

A 62-year-old male was admitted to the hospital after a major stroke. His treatment continued for almost a week as his body was completely paralyzed. The doctors explained to the family member that he got the required treatment at the hospital, and since he requires long-term care hence must be shifted to a rehabilitation center for complete nursing and rehabilitation care to prevent infection, bedsores, and feeding complications which will be very difficult to manage at home. The family member refused as they felt this is against their social and culture norms to shift their elder to a nursing home.

### ARGUMENT

The elderly patient with chronic illness should be shifted to a nursing care home to prevent further complications of illness. It will have an impact on the other sick elderly patient in the community and a large number of sick elders will motivate toward nursing care homes due to its good outcomes. A theory that supports the above point is a theory of utilitarianism. This theory judges actions on the outcomes. As Savulescu *et al.*, 2020 also stated that utilitarianism is a moral theory that supports right actions are those which have good outcomes for a greater number of individuals in a community [4]. Nursing care homes benefit the elderly ill patients by reducing their complications like bedsores, infections, aspirations, etc. Also, it reduces the readmission, hospitalization, burden, and treatment cost of the elderly patient. As the nurses in nursing care homes are enriched in knowledge and skills to provide the needed care to these types of patients. In contrast, the majority of the family member does not have the appropriate nursing skill like positioning, feeding, skin care, etc. to provide the needed nursing care. In addition, it also gives high quality of life to the elderly patient and reduces the burden on the busy families.

### COUNTER ARGUMENT

On the other hand, some families oppose shifting their elders with chronic illnesses to nursing care homes. Because they believe that this is against their cultural, social, and religious norms and it also leads to a financial burden on the family. They consider that it is their responsibility to provide care to their elder although they are unaware of the appropriate nursing care. Due to this resistance, there is a shortage of nursing care homes in these communities. And the unavailability of nursing care homes compromises long-term care as they are at more risk for developing bedsores, infections, and aspirations. The ethical theory of relativism states that moral principles get their validity through cultural approval [5]. In the above case, the

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patient attendant also expressed that this is against our cultural and social norms to shift their elder to a nursing care home.

## POSITIONALITY

Our positionality is to follow the ethical theory of utilitarianism versus the social and cultural norms of the specific community. The opponents will be convinced about the benefits of nursing care homes to a large number of elderly ill patients. As elderly are very prone to get bedsores, infections and feeding complications. They will also be convinced that if nursing care homes are available, then the patients with chronic illness will be managed in a proper way and there will be good outcomes and consequences to a large number of the community.

## ANALYSIS

There are many factors that lead to resistance to nursing care homes like health illiteracy, social and cultural norms, and emotional attachment to the elders. As in the above scenario, the attendant verbalized that it is against their norms to transfer their ill elderly to the nursing care home. Although the social and cultural norms sometimes are not appropriate in some circumstances in this case, the attendant was using his social norms as a defense for not transferring the ill elderly patient to a nursing care home. By this decision, the attendant was not only affecting his own elder but was also affecting the entire elder population who need long-term nursing care. In addition, some attendants have strong emotional attachments with their elders so they make hurried decisions that affect the long-term care of the patient. The social and cultural norms will not be justified in this case because we have to think for the greater benefit of the community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Government should build nursing care homes and home health care facilities should be available in each community for the provision of care to the ill elderly population. The government stakeholders also need to make such laws and policies which support the approval of nursing care homes. In addition, awareness sessions should be arranged by the health department to bring awareness to the public regarding the importance of nursing care homes. Moreover, the help of religious scholars should be taken to convince the public regarding the importance of nursing care homes.

## CONCLUSION

The nursing care home is very important for the rehabilitation and restoration of elderly ill patients, and it also helps in uplift their quality of life. Despite strong resistance from communities due to their social and cultural norms, nursing care homes should be promoted for better health outcomes for a large number of elderly sick patients.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Declared none.

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