

Rest is to Rust

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AGEING is a chronological process of physical and mental changes that decrease the functioning of organic cells. It results in the decline of the body's ability to function effectively. This debility can be prevented from deterioration and worsening to a certain extent by paying special attention to developing right attitudes towards old age. Encouraging the aged to use their abilities for the benefit of society cheers them up and helps them to live as useful persons in society.

Dr. H. Mahler, Director-General of WHO, in 1982 when he spoke on the topic 'Adding Life to Years' said that the aged could contribute to society in many ways specially in the realm of art. Experience would bring out the best in them and they can be made to shine as sculptors, musicians, writers and architects, if they are deliberately not excluded. He appealed to Government to create opportunities where the aged can contribute for the development of the nation and not to cut them off from the working world.

Miss Margaret Kuhu (USA), a 70-year old spinster, the founder of the "wrinkled radical movement", fighting for the rights of the aged, says that "Rest is to Rust." It is literally true for just as material things, if left unused, accumulate rust, so also the intellectual capacities of human beings deteriorate if not used for the betterment of society after retirement from active service.

Retiring from regular employment, does not mean that the person is useless, incapable and unserviceable any longer. She can continue serving as long as she lives as the part of her family. Her rich experiences earned by years of hard work and research can be profitably used for the benefit of society, instead of allowing them to rust soon after their retirement.

Indian culture in the past has shown great respect to their elders in the family. The younger ones felt protected under their loving care, in the joint family system. Today, all over the world, including India, this system is being replaced by the sophisticated nuclear family system which has its own benefits and hazards. Due to rapid changes as a result of urbanization and industrialization, the old order is quickly being replaced by a new one and the joint family system is disintegrating from the integrated pattern of family life. The contribution of the old is no more valued, as the generation gap grows in the family set up. Their guidance is rarely sought and their rich experience of the past is no more counted as valuable and precious. The blessings of the elders, considered so essential for the prosperity of the family in the past, has little appeal among the young today. This gradual change in the society has brought about new kinds of problems. The aged are left to

their fate, ignored, disappointed and helpless. A retired person is stamped as old and incapable of active service. This is a myth: based on prejudice and not on real facts, especially in India. There are a good number of myths on old age, to mention a few here, they are:

Myth on Chronological age: Mythical belief is responsible to fix the retirement age as 55, 58, 65 or 70. It varies from country to country. Evidence shows that individuals vary in their psychological, physiological and sociological advancement in life. Stereotype beliefs about ageing are not true regarding all individuals. Many a 70 year old man, can walk fast, run fast, and work hard. Many aged persons are very fluent in their speech, wise in their decisions and rich in experience and vocabulary. Their wisdom and knowledge surpasses that of the learned young. In developing countries when there is a dearth of experienced scientists and specialists, why cannot the government utilize the services of the old even after their retirement?

Myth on Senility and Dementia: Senility and dementia are feared as part of old age, but these too are conditional and not applicable to all, certainly not soon after retirement. It is the lack of support and encouragement from the youngsters that often leads to stress and deteriorates his mental condition. A younger person put under stress can behave in the same manner as his aged parents.

Myth on Tranquillity: A person after retirement is expected to lead a peaceful life, devoid of initiatives and leadership. But this is debatable. Today, the old are worried about their normal existence. Food and medicine bills, shelter and recreational needs, make them seek employment instead of lapsing into a peaceful idle life.

Myth on Productivity: Many believe that older a person becomes less he can work and be productive. Evidence shows that business men, doctors, lawyers, politicians and actors are more productive and work harder, as they grow older. Often it is they who travel the world over and amass a lot of wealth. Some have become rich after retirement just because they could use their leisure time more profitably, relieved of their official burden of responsibilities.

In my opinion, I envisage certain areas where the services of the old could be utilized with profit. The Government could open consultation bureaus where people could register to offer their services freely. Willingness to serve certainly produce activity and activity yields energy to work.

I also feel that many spinsters, widows and religious men and women have a lot of energy to render dedicated services, long after the age of retirement has been attained. They should be allowed to con-

(Continued on p. 301)

suffering to the patient becomes inhumane, since the nurse works in order to alleviate human suffering. Any deviations from her legal obligation and responsibilities may lead her to legal involvement. Usually, patients seek redressal through a law suit against the doctor or the nurse for the poor result, injury or alleged negligence and claim for damage and compensation.

Somo Tips to Avoid Legal Involvement

- (1) Know the legal implications in Nursing profession.
- (2) Know the rules and regulations of the institution, where employed.
- (3) Know your relationship with others such as doctors, patients and other employees, including public.
- (4) Know your limitations.
- (5) Know the hazards of modern electronic equipment.
- (6) Know the basic human needs and provide skillful service, based on them (dignity, respect and right, unrestricted by race, nationality, creed, caste, colour social or economic status).
- (7) Keep in confidence all personal information, confidential in nature obtained from the patient in the course of nursing, unless required by law to disclose it.
- (8) Avoid use of professional knowledge and skills in any enterprise detrimental to the public good.
- (9) Never delegate your services and duties to

other persons less qualified.

(10) Know what is negligence. Avoid omission and commission in discharge of duties.

(11) Use reasonable care and skill in discharge of professional duties.

(12) Follow the doctors' instructions carefully without any lapses and always keep the patients' charts and records up-to-date and accurate.

(13) Avoid gossip, idle and malice talk—avoid slander and libel.

(14) Lift and transfer patients carefully from bed to trolley or stretcher and vice versa—never use force.

(15) Protect your patient from cross infection.

(16) Remember that patient has a right to refuse treatment. In such cases do not force. Hold up treatment and inform the concerned medical man immediately.

(17) Judge the situation and use discretion.

(18) Take written consent from the patient for all special and surgical procedures, preferably with a witness.

(19) Be prompt and accurate in reporting and communications.

(20) Take care of the personal belongings of the patient admitted (clothing, valuables, etc) and record them, taking his signature. In case they are of any evidentiary value in medico-legal aspects, keep them safely and hand over to police when required.

(21) Avoid errors in medication.

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(Continued from page 299)

tinue working for the benefit of society.

In a developing country, we cannot afford to make anyone sit idle whether young or old. We should utilize their services for a healthy and prosperous nation.

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A Recipe for Quality Nursing

Take two packages of commonsense, a commodity so rare

A packet of academic excellence, many presume not essential or fair,

Mix together with an equal measure of professional competence,

Add two handfuls of dexterity, nimbler the hands, the better,

Mix the ingredients well, with skillfulness and tact, Add a pinch of confidence and determination for taste.

Take another cupful of courage to act as A mindful of ingenuity and patience to supply proteins,

Mix well with a heartful of love in a separate dish, Add two packages of empathy to provide energy

required,

Mix together with sincerity and judgement, ad lib, Kneading it well with water to make it a paste.

Now mix the two together in an electric mixy, Add a dash of laughter with a mindful of understanding,

Add plenty of faith, hope and kindness, vitamins so essential,

Remember to sprinkle the essence of love and concern,

Spread it well over a life time with service above self,

And you will be serving as a Good Quality Nurse, your life time.

Sr. Marianne Adayadil