Health Care System for the Elderly

What is the issue?

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India has a favorable demographic dividend but soon would be offset by rapid ageing of people at the top end of the scale.

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What could offset the gains of demographic dividend?

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- Demographic dividend (DD) occurs when the proportion of working people in the total population is high.
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- This indicates that more people have the potential to be productive and contribute to growth of the economy.
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- But this will eventually lead to approximately 20% of Indians being elderly by 2050.
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- This would be a dramatic jump from the current 6% level.
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- This is a cause of concern for policymakers as India already has the world's second largest population of the elderly i.e people above 60 years of age
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- This would increase demand for healthcare services and accommodation and there by generating enormous socio-economic pressures.
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What is the need to re-gear the health care system?

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- According to the National Sample Survey Organisation's 2004 survey,

nearly 3% of elderly were living alone, 9.3% were living with their spouses and 35.6%.
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- However many among the younger generation are increasing nleft with less time, energy and willingness to care for their parents, or simply emigrate abroad and are unable to do so.
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- Therefore elders suffer abandonment by family, destitution, inability to access health care, low levels of institutional support, loneliness and depression.
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- Also as the size of the elderly population expands, there will be a shift in the disease patterns from communicable to non-communicable.
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What should be done?

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- Even though the private sector is making available a variety of retirement communities across the country in addition to innovations in healthcare delivery, still the e**lderly poor very much depend on the government** to come up with the resources and institutions to support their needs.
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- Several mature economies have created multiple models for elder care, such as universal health insurance, networks of nursing homes etc.,
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- India should also adopt such a system.
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- The advocacy and information campaigns shoul be to redirect social attitudes toward ageing.
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- The health-care system should be regeared toward ‘preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative aspects of health’.
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Source: The Hindu

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