



# INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (HQS.)

(Registered under the Societies Act XXI of 1860)

Mutually Affiliated with the British & Nepal Medical Associations

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## Press Release

### **Lack of awareness about dementia in India, says IMA**

*The problem is more in rural areas where there are not enough medical facilities available for timely diagnosis*

**New Delhi, 01 August 2017:** According to statistics from a recent research, more than 4 million Indians above the age of 60 suffer from dementia. Add to this the fact that about 1 in 16 households with an elderly person have a dementia patient. However, many people fail to recognize and understand the symptoms, says the IMA. In approximately 70% of the population in rural areas as well, dementia remains unrecognized and this can be largely attributed to limited medical facilities.

Dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability. This can become severe enough to interfere with daily life. Memory loss is an example. Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia. Dementia is an umbrella term describing a wide range of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills. These can later become severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities.

Speaking about this, **Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement**, said, “Lack of awareness about dementia is a major reason why those who experience forgetfulness, confusion, or difficulty in doing something do not consult doctors. There are also those individuals who may not choose to talk about it considering it shameful or a normal part of the ageing process. Dementia is caused by a damage to brain cells which further interferes with their ability to communicate with each other. This can affect thinking, behavior, and feelings in those with this condition. Dementia in most cases is not reversible but medication can provide some relief to the symptoms. At times, symptoms may appear due to reversible problems like vitamin or hormone deficiencies. These can be treated with timely consultation.”

While symptoms of dementia vary in people, there are some basic signs which are significant in the diagnosis of dementia: loss of memory, problems with communication and language, decreased ability to focus and pay attention, impaired reasoning and judgment, and decreased visual perception.

Adding further, **Dr Aggarwal**, said, “Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) is the most widely used cognitive test for dementia. The examination takes approximately 7 minutes to complete. It tests a

broad range of cognitive functions including orientation, recall, attention, calculation, language manipulation, and constructional praxis. A total maximal score on the MMSE is 30 points. A score of less than 24 points is suggestive of dementia or delirium. It is also recommended that people with dementia be screened for depression because it is a common treatable co-morbidity that may also masquerade as dementia.”

Although there is no specific way to prevent dementia, following a healthy lifestyle can help lower the risk. The following steps can be taken towards this direction.

- Consume a healthy diet
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Indulge in regularly physical activity
- Do not consume alcohol in excess
- Quit smoking right away
- Maintain a healthy blood pressure level

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**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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