

Facility for senior citizens proposed

The State government had sent a proposal to the Central government to set up a separate hospital for the elderly and was awaiting clearance, Health Secretary V.K. Subburaj said here on Monday. At a function organised to mark World Alzheimer's Day at the Institute of Mental Health, Kilpauk, he underscored the need to create more awareness about the health problems of senior citizens.

The Health Secretary urged doctors in district headquarters hospitals to accord priority to senior citizens. "Not all government hospital beds are fully occupied all the time. At least 20 per cent of them remain vacant and could be used to accommodate elderly patients," he said in response to a request from Indirani Rajadurai, national director of HelpAge India. She wanted every district headquarters hospital to have a geriatric ward. Ms. Rajadurai wanted greater involvement from the public to fight the stigma attached to Alzheimer's disease.

The IMH, in association with the Chennai chapter of the Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India and HelpAge India, organised a human chain to drive home the message that neglect and isolation of the elderly could trigger depression. A symposium was held on Alzheimer's disease and its prevention.

Madras Medical College Dean J. Mohanasundaram said remaining active and keeping the brain occupied would prevent degeneration of the brain cells.

IMH Director R. Sathianathan said memory loss was not age-related. "It is important to identify the changes in behaviour early and diagnose the condition," he said. The first changes would be identified only by the family. The family members should not ignore forgetfulness or changes in behaviour in the elderly as part of growing old, he pointed out.