

Developing a Governmental Policy to Protect Elders in Residential Settings in Israel

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In Israel during Covid-19 pandemic there was, till recently, an emphasis on how older people, especially those 70+ are the most vulnerable to become Corona victims. Also, especially during the early times of Covid-19, imposing strict restrictions and complete lock down led to social exclusion which caused especially many residents of nursing homes stress and anxiety. Thus, it became imperative to develop a social inclusion framework and empower elders in general, and especially those in long term care - the residents of 300 sheltered housing and old age nursing home facilities, in particular.

The main issue, during this difficult time, where we had to cope with Covid-19 pandemic, is considering the appropriate policy and its implications for these older population.

The current policy of full isolation, regardless of the differences in health and functioning of residents, might cause full and for some fatal isolation. The implications are that expression of such ageism regarding older residents, who even in normal times many of them feel handicapped and isolated, caused suffering now so much more. It is a violation of human rights and infringement of quality of life. Such policy in my view, as one involved in the field of elder abuse and neglect for many years, is infringement of basic rights and might cause harm to many residents, especially those living alone.

No question that these population, especially in nursing homes, who are frail and vulnerable, should receive during such difficult Corona times special care. Some best practices would have been to recruit more caregivers and more Corona tests performed.

After the Government realized that changes and solution should take place, a national Program: "Securing Mothers and Fathers" had been developed and an experienced professional

was selected to head the program. It helped first the workers in the various facilities who had a person who could provide advice and support. Additionally, it provided the families of the different residents a source of consultation and help when needed, to help with their parents-grandparents and an opportunity to be in better touch with them.

Also, more resources were allocated to the different homes like more helpers with the older residents, more investigation about upcoming needs etc.

To sum, all these activities and resources allocated, through the "Securing Mothers and Fathers" program helped both the residents of the various old age homes and their families, as well as the staff and the different managers of the residential facilities. It changed the atmosphere and provided a better quality of life for all these elders in such homes.

We should bare in mind that the program has to be evaluated as the situation changes, especially after most residents and workers in these homes, as well as community residents got the two vaccinations against Covid-19 pandemic.

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