One of the major challenges of the success of health sciences is the increasing number of geriatric population in the society. It is estimated that by the year 2050, nearly 1.2 billion of 1.5 billion geriatric people of age 65 or above will reside in today’s less developed regions. Also, 20% of the total geriatric population of the world would be in India. This can be attributed to the improved quality and widespread implementation of health care systems in developing countries like India. We definitely need to congratulate the developing countries for this success. However, we also need to introspect honestly, whether the increased life expectancy means better life or just more number of years of poor health. We need to constantly remind ourselves of the phrase that ‘it is important to add life to years and not years to life’.

One important aspect of providing quality life to the geriatric population is by ensuring that they receive quality nutrition and a balanced diet. A balanced diet must contain carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and fibers. Each of these nutrients has a vital role in the all round growth and development of children and is equally imperative to geriatric individuals for maintaining health. It is important that all nutrients be present in the required amount in a balanced diet because lack of one or more nutrients can lead to nutritional deficiencies.

Awareness about diet and nutritional requirement and its role in health maintenance is significantly low in the Indian population as compared to developed countries. Geriatric malnutrition is a fact and indeed a very serious issue. It is important to make the geriatric patients aware of it and to be motivated to take corrective measures. Various factors affect the nutritional status in geriatric patients such as change in metabolism, chronic diseases, diminished absorption, chronic periodontal diseases, partial or complete loss of teeth, multiple carious teeth, physical disabilities etc. Many health related problems of aging can be prevented and treated successfully if the status of diet and nutrition is balanced in every geriatric patient. Improvement in nutritional status will result in optimizing functional status and general well-being.

The geriatric population is a very important asset of our society, their experience and guidance in real life is invaluable. As dental surgeons, we always think what we can give back to the society? One of the answers is acquiring detailed knowledge of diet and nutrition and guide our patients during our long and repeated dental appointments. This way, dental surgeons can strike a correct balance between work and their responsibility towards society at large and obtain professional happiness.

Reference

How to cite this Article: Palaskar J. Diet & nutrition in geriatric patients - A matter of concern. J Dent Allied Sci 2012;1(2):44.

Source of Support: Nil. Conflict of Interest: None Declared.