

# Caregivers with personal touch

## A STAFF REPORTER

A caregiver who can double as a companion and supervise the kitchen — that's what two doctors and a medical planner had in mind when they set up Care Continuum.

The healthcare provider promises to look after the elderly, the infirm as well as those suffering from chronic and critical ailments and need to be treated at home.

Care Continuum began with 14 patients in 2014. Today, 100-odd specialised caregivers look after more than 500 patients, an official said.

Since some family members of the terminally ill give up hope and require counselling, Care Continuum has been training its staff not only in medical care but also in soft skills and communication, he said.

Rana Mukherjee, general surgeon and one of the directors of Care Continuum, said if needed the caregivers could also help with bank-related work and buy groceries for them.

"There are so many helpless senior citizens around. Once we had to serve a couple



**Lalit Mohan Mukherjee, 83, at the Care Continuum programme.** Picture by Bishwarup Dutta

where the husband had cancer and the wife dementia. Their children requested us to help run the house," he said.

Personalised packages for special kids, convalescents and critical care range from Rs 6,800 a week (for 12 hours) to Rs 15,500 a week (for 24 hours).

"Most of our healthcare options are personalised and include a doctor's consultation," Mukherjee said.

He and co-founders Soma Bhattacharjee, general physi-

cian, and Maitreyee Bhattacharjee organised Care Continuum's first seminar for the nursing staff of 40 hospitals at a city hotel on Friday.

"There is room for improvement in the quality of caregivers and there's a huge demand for it," Soma Bhattacharjee said. "So, we decided to come up with an alternative option for those in need."

"More than 70 per cent people prefer returning home when they are diagnosed with

cancer in an advanced stage," said Sunipa Panja Gupta, a nurse with the Tata Medical Center's palliative unit.

"It is not enough to provide such patients with only medical assistance. What they need most is empathy, emotional support and help in settling family issues. Sometimes we have to cater to something as basic as wanting to watch a Salman Khan movie." Panja Gupta was among the participants at the seminar.

"For critical patients, we even create a wish list... help family members arrange treats for them. Recently, a patient wanted pasanda kebab and the caregiver ensured he got it. Building a rapport with the patient while providing emotional support is an important part of our training," Maitreyee Bhattacharjee said.

"Caregivers are specially trained to provide palliative care to the terminally ill. We have had more than 12 such patients till now," she said.

Lalit Mohan Mukherjee, 83, climbed the stairs to reach the seminar on Friday. The octogenarian, who has had Parkinson's for 14 years, said he was glad he could step out of his house — "thanks to the physiotherapist of Care Continuum".

"Initially, I wanted to get rid of caregivers. But now that my mobility has increased I am giving in to their therapy. Accepting help is also a big step towards improvement," said Mukherjee, who recently had a bout of pancreatitis.

Those who want to contact Care Continuum can call 40054009 or write in at [connect@carecontinuum.in](mailto:connect@carecontinuum.in)