

BEING HUMAN

How a motley group, comprising professionals and retired folk, in the city has become a support system to the ailing and those in need of hospitalisation

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In this day of nuclear families and double-income couples, handling hospitalisation or attending to the sick at home has turned into a veritable challenge. Responding to this growing need, in an unprecedented move, a group of Pune-kars have come together to volunteer as attendants, filling in for family members who may either be called away on other work, engagement or errand or simply be in need of some relief from the strenuous hours of being by the bedside of the ailing.

Remarkably, what began as an initiative by five people — Madhavi Thakurdesai, Shrirang Palande, Asmita Patwe, Nitin Thakurdesai and Upendra Pendse — in June, has already grown into a 30-member volunteering team, under the banner, Being With You. The volunteers, interestingly, range between the age group of 40 and 70 years. Some are retired people, while some others run their own businesses. But most importantly, they've made space in their schedule to relieve others and render the yeomen service pro bono.

To date, they've already attended to at least 40 patients in hospitals such as Deenanath Mangeshkar, Sahyadri, Shashwat and Sassoon, as well as some at their homes. Madhavi Thakurdesai, whose inspiration came from a personal experience, pointed out that this seemed to be a more meaningful social work rather than cleaning neighbourhoods or undertaking tree plantation. "When there is a sick person at home or in hospital, the family's routine invariably gets disrupted. Even for a homemaker catering to the needs of the ailing over and above their intense involvement with the household, a few hours of respite is critical. Such people can approach us to pitch in," said the 56-year-old, who is herself a homemaker.

Operating through a WhatsApp group where the requirements are alerted, they decide on the volunteer who can take on the job based on convenience and also try matching the age of the volunteer with that of the patient so that there is no generation gap in the communication with the caretaker.

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MANOJ BIDKAR



Members of Being With You are available on call to those facing a health scare