

BEACONS OF HOPE A SHOT OF HOPE

Mentally ill at Thane hosp get Covid vax and that dose of feeling wanted

NITASHA.NATU@TIMESGROUP.COM

Mumbai:

Khushiram (name changed), 61, flashed his trademark smile and did a namaste as a nurse was to give him the jab at Thane Mental Hospital. For a good part of a decade that he has been here, Khushiram has not had any visitors to check on him. Like most other patients “forgotten” by their families and having no identity documentation. So their ‘guardian’, the hospital superintendent, facilitated their online registration for the Covid vaccine, using his own phone number, and 400 inmates got life-saving shots on Tuesday and Wednesday. While the patients may not understand the need to get jabbed, hospital doctors hope their inoculation will result in herd immunity in the wards.

The Union health ministry recently issued an SOP for registration on the CoWin platform for individuals who do not have photo identity documents. The SOP says that a key facilitator with a valid ID card can become a pointperson for vaccination of the group. “We identified 220 female and 180 male inmates who are above 45 and eligible for vaccination. Patients with mental illness are vulnerable and we tried our best to procure vaccines for them. But not having documentation was a major hurdle until now,” said superintendent Dr Sanjay Bodade.

Unlike other institutions, like prisons or old age homes, it wasn’t feasible to gather patients on the premises as it would need an army of hospital attendants. So, doctors took the vaccination camp to the wards instead.

“Our volunteers went from ward to ward with doctors and nurses.

Patients were called for jabs and kept in observation for half an hour,” said Shishir Joshi of Project Mumbai, a non-profit that assisted in the vaccination process. Nurses will be keeping round-a-clock watch on vaccine beneficiaries as some may not be able to express if they have a fever or other side-effects. Among those vaccinated was a bunch of 12 from a ward reserved for undertrials and convicts medically certified ‘mentally ill’.

In all, 190 inmates from the hospital have had Covid and so could not be given the vaccine. The facility which has only one ambulance was in desperate need of oxygen cylinders in the peak of the second wave. Project Mumbai donated 15 oxygen concentrators in April and provided gloves, syringes, needles, hand sanitiser for the vaccination drive.



As patients have no documents, the hospital chief played ‘guardian’

Hope Partner



॥ उद्यमात् सकल समृद्धिः ॥

MIDC