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Patients in a dilemma as hospital beds become scarce

They are finding hard to acquire oxygen and other essential COVID-19 drugs too

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When a 35-year-old software professional tested positive for COVID-19, a telemedicine specialist that he consulted advised home isolation as he had no symptoms initially. However, when he developed some mild symptoms after two days, the doctor advised him to get a high-resolution computed tomography (HRCT) done and the scan showed significant changes in his lung. From then on the infection pro-

gressed rapidly and oxygen saturation levels too dropped. He required hospitalisation at the earliest, but by the time he got a bed his condition had further worsened and he required ICU admission.

Doctors said early intervention would have helped in easily managing the case with oxygen in a high dependency unit. It is not just beds that patients are finding hard to find, but also oxygen and other essential COVID-19 drugs. In fact, several patients have lost lives waiting for a bed and oxygen in the last few days as most smaller hospitals have run out of oxygen.

After testing positive for the disease, most patients are in a dilemma over whether



Universal Gas factory at Peenya is one of the oxygen cylinder distribution centres in Bengaluru. ■ SUDHAKARA JAIN

er to look for a bed immediately or not.

"If I wait till my symptoms worsen and then start looking for a bed, I am worried my condition would deteriorate by the time I get a bed given the scarcity. So, I have

been continuously calling the government helplines 1912 and 108 requesting a bed allotment," said a 27-year-old Zoya Fathima, who has only mild symptoms.

V. Ravi, member, State's Technical Advisory Commit-

Try the six-minute walk test

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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V. Ravi, member, State's TAC, said it is important that people have a pulse oximeter handy and monitor their oxygen saturation regularly.

Advising a six-minute walk test, he said, "The individual will have to

walk for six straight minutes, without a pause, on an even surface with the oximeter on. After six minutes, if the oxygen level does not fall, the individual is considered healthy. Saturation should not go below 94. This test will help in early identification."

tee (TAC), who is also the nodal officer for genomic confirmation of SARS-CoV-2 in Karnataka, said the patients' dilemma can be addressed if there is proper monitoring of those in home isolation.

"In the second wave be-

cause of the huge number of cases being reported daily, monitoring of those in home isolation has become a huge challenge. This is our weakest point in the second wave and people are developing complications," he said.

Haleema Yezdani, a general physician who has been regularly tele-triaging and tele-treating COVID-19 patients through the Emergency Response Team and Project StepOne groups that offer free service to people in getting beds and treatment, said people should not ignore any symptoms such as fever, body ache, headache, cold, cough among others.

"It is better to seek medical advice at the earliest. Depending on the symptoms and investigations, the doctor will decide if a patient requires admission or not," she said.

Stating that the patients' dilemma is natural, Dr. Yezdani said the need of the hour is to start more COVID-19 Care Centres (CCCs).