

On World Alzheimer's Day, Dr. Rao Says India's Real Alzheimer's Gap Isn't Access to New Drugs — It's Access to Diagnosis

As FDA-track Alzheimer's drugs get easier to deliver, Indian neurosurgeon says the real gap isn't new medication — it's late diagnosis.

GUNTUR, ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA, September 21, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Marking World Alzheimer's Day, neurosurgeons in India are drawing attention to a growing disconnect: as Alzheimer's treatment technology in the United States moves toward more convenient, at-home delivery — including a [subcutaneous autoinjector formulation of the anti-amyloid drug lecanemab](#) (marketed as Leqembi), approved by the U.S. FDA in 2025, with a once-weekly starting-dose option now under

dementia never receive a formal diagnosis.

An estimated [8.8 million Indians aged 60 and above are currently living with dementia](#), according to nationwide estimates published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, with Alzheimer's disease accounting for roughly 70 to 75 percent of these cases. That number is projected to rise sharply as India's population of adults over 60 — currently around 138 million — is expected to nearly reach 194 million within the next five years.

According to Dr. Mohana Rao Patibandla, a neuro-oncology and skull base neurosurgeon and Founder & Director of Dr. Rao's Hospital – International Institute of Neurosciences (IIN) in Guntur, the newer generation of anti-amyloid drugs represents genuine scientific progress — but one that will have limited real-world impact in India without a parallel push on early recognition.

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Dr. Mohana Rao Patibandla
M. Ch (NIMS), FESSB (KIMS), FRACS (USA),
FMS (US), USAL, FEMS (USA), USAL, FPKS (ICU, USA)

Founder & CMO | Chief Neurosurgeon
Dr. Rao's Hospital — International Institute of Neurosciences (IIN)
Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India

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info@draashospitals.com

World Alzheimer's Day – 21 September 2026 Early diagnosis can make a meaningful difference in Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Mohana Rao Patibandla and Dr. Rao's Hospital – International Institute of Neurosciences (IIN), Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, join the global

"Anti-amyloid therapies like lecanemab work by targeting the disease in its earliest stages, before significant cognitive decline has occurred — that's precisely where their benefit is greatest," Dr. Rao said. "But in India, memory loss in an older adult is still very often dismissed by families as a normal part of ageing rather than investigated as a medical condition. By the time a family brings a patient in for evaluation, the disease has frequently progressed well past the stage where early-intervention therapies would have made the most difference."

Dr. Rao noted that this pattern is compounded by geography. "A therapy delivered through a simple weekly injection is a meaningful convenience improvement for patients in cities with access to a memory clinic or neurologist," he said. "But for a large share of India's ageing population living outside major cities, the more basic barrier isn't the format of the treatment — it's whether a diagnostic pathway exists to identify the condition at all."



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Globally, dementia affects more than 55 million people, according to World Health Organization estimates, a figure expected to nearly double by 2050 amid population ageing, with low- and middle-income countries — including India — projected to bear an increasingly large share of that burden.

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A therapy delivered by weekly injection helps patients who reach a clinic. Most Indian families never get that far — the real barrier is diagnosis, not drug delivery.”

*Dr. Mohana Rao Patibandla,
Neurosurgeon & Founder, Dr.
Rao's Hospital*

Dr. Rao pointed to early warning signs that families and primary care physicians should treat as prompts for evaluation rather than as normal ageing: difficulty recalling recent conversations or events, repeated questions within a short span of time, disorientation in familiar surroundings, and noticeable changes in judgment or personality. "None of these require a specialist to notice first," he said. "They usually show up at home, long before anyone thinks to bring them to a doctor. Closing that gap in recognition, not just improving the drugs themselves, is what will actually change outcomes for the majority of

Indian families dealing with this disease."

IIN's neuroscience program includes cognitive and neurological evaluation as part of its broader practice, alongside the institute's core focus areas in cerebrovascular, skull base, pediatric, and

oncologic neurosurgery.

About Dr. Mohana Rao Patibandla

Dr. Mohana Rao Patibandla is a minimally invasive neurosurgeon, pediatric neurosurgeon, cerebrovascular endovascular neurosurgeon, skull base neurosurgeon, neuro-oncologist, and stereotactic radiosurgeon. He completed his M.Ch in Neurosurgery at the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS), Hyderabad, followed by subspecialty fellowships at the University of Colorado Denver (pediatric neurosurgery), Ohio State University (endoscopic skull base surgery), and the University of Virginia Medical Center (surgical neuro-oncology, Gamma Knife, and endovascular neurosurgery). He has authored 66 publications indexed on Google Scholar and was recognized with the AANS/CNS Section on Tumors BrainLab Community Neurosurgery Award for outstanding brain tumor research in 2018. In 2026, his team received the Best Free Paper Award and a Gold Medal at MISSABCON-PASMISS, the Pacific Asia Society of Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery's international congress in Chennai, for work on minimally invasive and endoscopic approaches to complex craniovertebral junction disorders.

About Dr. Rao's Hospital – International Institute of Neurosciences (IIN)

Dr. Rao's Hospital – International Institute of Neurosciences (IIN), based in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, is a dedicated neuroscience center offering minimally invasive skull base surgery, endovascular surgery, stereotactic

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Know the Early Signs

- Memory loss
- Confusion about time or place
- Difficulty finding words
- Trouble with familiar tasks
- Changes in mood or behavior

"Memory changes should never be dismissed as a normal part of aging. Early evaluation can make a meaningful difference."

– Dr. Mohana Rao Patibandla
Founder, Chairman & Chief Neurosurgeon
Dr. Rao's Hospital – International Institute of Neurosciences (IIN), Guntur

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radiosurgery, neuro-oncology, and pediatric neurosurgery. The institute is equipped with intraoperative neurophysiological monitoring (IONM), functional brain mapping, neuronavigation, a biplane catheterisation laboratory, a hybrid operation theatre, and intraoperative CT imaging. IIN draws patients from across India and internationally and has been recognized by Forbes India.

Media Contact:

Dr. Rao's Hospital – International
Institute of Neurosciences (IIN)
Old Bank Street, besides AK Biryani
Point, Kothapeta, Guntur, Andhra
Pradesh, India

Press inquiries: 9010056444

Mohana Rao Patibandla

Patibandla Naryana Swamy Neurosciences LLP - Dr. Rao's Hospi
8008439393398

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