

## Rats bite two patients at Kandivali civic hospital

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Pramila Nerulkar

Paralysed woman bitten on her eye; relatives complain of unhygienic conditions

Mumbai: Two women, including a paralysis patient, admitted to the BMC-run Babasaheb Ambedkar Municipal General Hospital in Kandivali, popularly known as Shatabdi Hospital, have been bitten by rats in the last one week.

Angry patients and families have complained to the civic authorities about the complete lack of hygiene and cleanliness in the hospital and a severe rodent infestation in the wards.

Shantaben Jadhav, who is in her seventies and is admitted for uncontrolled diabetes and a fractured foot, was bitten by a rat on the leg on Sunday, while Pramila Nerulkar, a 68-year-old paralysis patient, was bitten on her left eye on October 3.

Ms. Nerulkar, who is paralysed on the left side, was bitten by the rodent around 5 a.m. She could not move or raise an alarm, but managed to make a feeble noise that woke up her daughter-in-law, who was sleeping next to her bed.

Ms. Nerulkar's son, Ratnakar, said, "My wife immediately switched on the lights, and saw a huge rat running away and blood dripping from my mother's eye."

He said the doctors rushed to the ward, cleaned the wound and prescribed medication. Ms. Nerulkar has been hospitalised in the first floor women's ward since September 29.

Ratnakar said the hospital staff are reluctant to change bedsheets, and the wards are hardly cleaned. "If there is no basic cleanliness, there will obviously be rodents. It is extremely upsetting that a patient who is admitted for care is instead put at further risk," he said.



On hearing Ms. Nerulkar's relatives discuss the matter, Ms. Jadhav revealed that she was bitten on Sunday. The medical officer on duty confirmed both rat bite cases.

He said, "Both patients are being treated and several measures are being taken to control the rat menace."

He said that since it is a hospital, chemical control is avoided and rat traps are set up at various points. "We plan to increase the number of rat traps, and have also started closing the entry points for rodents into the hospital," he said.

Ratnakar, a driver by profession, said that the condition of the civic hospital is shocking. "Poor people like us have nowhere else to go. This kind of treatment for patients is unacceptable," he said.

BJP MLA Manisha Choudhary visited the patients on Monday, and wrote to BMC Commissioner Ajoy Mehta, seeking a probe into irregularities at the hospital.

"Several relatives complained about lack of cleanliness, and harassment by Class IV staff, who demand bribes every time a patient wants a bedpan or any other help. One patient's relative said that he had to pay ₹50 to the female helper (aayah) for a bed pan every time. Another one complained that he had to pay ₹100 to take the patient for a CT scan. The staff demands ₹20 to change a patient's clothes," Ms. Chaudhary has said in the letter.