





Rethinking Geriatric Care: How 17- year- old Somya Jain, is Bridging the Intergenerational Gap Through Neuroscience and Empathy

At a time when many academic disciplines are becoming progressively more niche and specialized, a Grade 12 student at Dhirubhai Ambani International School, Somya Jain is working to bridge the gap and demystify the world of neurobiology for everyone else. With an underlying motivation to find ways in which science can be leveraged to solve broad social problems, Somya set out to understand the mechanism of cognitive decline and aging in the human brain, and find ways to communicate this topic to other children and teens in an accessible manner.

This initiative was fuelled by Somya's personal experiences witnessing her own grandmother struggling with dementia. Observing that children and teens often struggle to make sense of a grandparent's shifting behavior, she identified a critical gap in household health literacy and set out to replace confusion with compassionate understanding.

To translate complex medical explanations, she self-researched, authored and designed two child-friendly mini-books on Dementia and Parkinson's disease. These booklets involved simple caregiving tips and activities that children could complete alongside their grandparents.

To propagate this empathy further, Somya held several workshops titled 'Bridging the Gap' in her neighbourhood, which sought to educate children on the science behind degenerative neurological conditions through an interactive, gamified experience. The interactive sessions allowed children to empathise with those affected and learn ways through which they can support them. Through various activities, including memory games, sequencing exercises, and visual and speech tests, children learned about the challenges faced by individuals with Dementia or Parkinson's disease, and how these challenges relate to the functioning of the human brain. Somya continues to partner with several elderly care facilities to adopt these therapeutic activities.

Overall, this initiative has empowered today's youth with empathy fostering intergenerational connection."Bridging the Gap" brought the children closer to their grandparents instilling a deep sense of compassion and action.