

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Health Problems among Elderly Patients visiting Primary Health Centre of Deoli Block in Wardha District, Central India: A Cross-sectional Study

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### Abstract

Elderly is also known as senior citizens. There is a rapid growth in number of older population in India. The common health problems namely musculo-skeletal, cardiovascular, neurological, endocrinological systems, cataract, hearing difficulties, etc. are known to impair the quality of life (QOL) of the elderly population. The prevalence of common health problems among the elderly patients ( $\geq 60$  years) visiting the Deoli P.H.C was evaluated. A cross-sectional study was carried out and a pretested questionnaire was used for data collection. Most of the population in our study was illiterate. Most of them used assistive devices like spectacles, hearing aids, walking sticks, knee caps, lumbar belts etc. Most of the elderly reported ophthalmic problems, followed by cardiovascular, musculo-skeletal problems, GIT problems, insomnia, etc.

**Keywords:** Elderly patients, primary health centre, cross-sectional study, common health problems.

### Introduction

In India, elderly population consists of 7% of the total population; in which two third resides in villages and almost half of them they live in poor conditions. Aging is defined as a progressive deterioration of physiological functions with age, including a decrease in productivity (Gorman, 1999). The aged are one of the most vulnerable and high-risk groups in terms of health and socio-economic status in the society today. The aged (60+) represent about 7-8% of the population, most of them living below the poverty line (Balamurugan and Ramatirtham, 2012). The aged in the unorganized sector like agriculture, casual workers and landless laborers are in family responsibilities and unharmonious relationship which are the major problem faced by them, they have to work as long as they live (Tiwari *et al.*, 2010). The present study focuses on the evaluation of common age related health problems among the elderly attending Primary Health Centre, Deoli for their illnesses.

### Materials and methods

**Study area and population:** The study area was Primary Health Centre (PHC), Deoli functioning under the Dept. of Community Medicine, Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Maharashtra, India. This study included elderly patients ( $\geq 60$  years) visiting PHC Deoli for their illnesses during the month of Oct to Dec 2015. Total 202 elderly participants were interviewed during this duration. The interviewed participants during this duration were considered as the sample size for the study. Consent was taken from the elderly participants prior to the study.

**Data collection:** Interview technique was used for data collection, demographic and health details of the subjects were recorded on the predesigned proforma which included questions regarding age, sex, educational status, socio-economic status and health problems. The collected data was expressed in percentage.

### Results and discussion

Most (63.86%) of the patients were below 65 years age group. About 61.38% were male and 38.11% were females, 84.15% were married and 15.34% were widowed. About 41.58% were illiterate, followed by secondary school (21.12%), high school (20.79%) and primary school education (15.84%). Assistive devices were used by 89.59% elderly patients and 10.39% did not use any kind of assistive devices (Table 1). Similar results were shown by Srinivasan *et al.* (2010) in his study where majority reported using assistive devices (89%). Most (51.48%) of them earned between 5000-10,000 Rs./month. Elderly patients had wide range of health problems, out of which eye problems were reported by 69.80% followed by cardiovascular problems (61.88%), musculo-skeletal problems (51.98%), ENT problems (50%), respiratory and gastrointestinal problems (41.58%), insomnia (22.27%), oral problems (15.84%), skin and CNS disorders (15.34%) and genitourinary problems (5.94%). A study by Srinivasan *et al.* (2010) showed that majority of the respondents reported medical problems (85%) (Table 2). Arthritis was significantly more common among women.

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of the elderly patients (N=202).

Parameters	Sub-groups	No. of patients
Age (Years)	<65	129 (63.86%)
	66-70	42 (20.79%)
	71-75	10 (4.9%)
	>76	21 (9.9%)
Gender	Male	124(61.38%)
	Female	78 (38.11%)
Marital status	Married	171(84.15%)
	Widowed	31(15.34%)
	Illiterate	84(41.58%)
Education level	Primary school	32(15.84%)
	Secondary school	44(21.12%)
	High school	42(20.79%)
	<1000	32(15.84%)
Income (in Rs.)	1001-5000	42(20.29%)
	5001-10000	104(51.48%)
	>10000	24(11.88%)
	Used	181(89.6%)
Assistive devices (Spectacles, hearing aids, walking stick, lumbar belts and knee caps)	Not used	21(10.39%)

Table 2. Health problems of the elderly patients (Multiple responses) (N=202).

Health problems	No. of patients
Eye problem	141(69.8%)
Cardiovascular	125(61.88%)
Musculo-skeletal	105(51.98%)
ENT	102(50%)
Respiratory	84(41.58%)
Gastro intestinal	84(41.58%)
Oral problems	32(15.84%)
Insomnia	45(22.27%)
Skin disease	31(15.34%)
CNS disorder	31(15.34%)
Genitourinary	12(5.94%)

Table 3. Gender-wise distribution of elderly patients according to their blood pressure.

Blood pressure	Male	Female	Total
Normotensive	26(12.87%)	51(25.24%)	77(38.11%)
Pre-hypertension	70(34.65%)	2(0.99%)	72(35.64%)
Hypertension (stage-I)	16(7.92%)	13(6.43%)	29(14.35%)
Hypertension (Stage-II)	13(6.43%)	11(5.44%)	24(11.88%)

Multiple co-morbid conditions were seen among the elderly patients. Gender-wise distribution of the blood pressure showed that most of the elderly were normotensive (38.11%); followed by pre-hypertension (35.64%), hypertension stage-I (14.35%) and stage-II (11.88%). Total hypertensives found in the study were 61.89% (Table 3). In a study by Tiwari *et al.* (2010), he found similar results that 81.48% elderly were suffering from hypertension, 45.7% from pre-hypertensive state, 24.74% from stage-I hypertension and 11.04% from stage-II were observed.

### Conclusion

Most of the population in our study was illiterate. Most of them used assistive devices like spectacles, hearing aids, walking sticks, knee caps, lumbar belts etc.

Prevalence of most common health problems reported was ophthalmic (69.8%), cardiovascular (61.89%), musculo-skeletal (51.98%) and ENT problems (50%). Also problems like respiratory, GI and insomnia were observed. Moderate to severe hypertension was observed in 26.23% of elderly patients. The following recommendations were made out of the present study:

1. Healthy ageing should be more stressed and Awareness about the health problems in elderly should be more spread for their timely treatment. The best form of protection from health problems for elderly is by preventing them.
2. More stress on common elderly health problems should be done and cost of health treatment should be addressed so, that no person is denied necessary health care for financial reasons.

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