

Stress Problems in Elderly people

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Abstract

Introduction: Ageing is considered a problem in our society. Old age is the time associated with physical, a psychological and social change which leads to vulnerable conditions to acquire physical, psychological and social health problems. This study aims to find out the health problems among elderly and to determine the factors associated with health problems. So, they need proper physical as well as social care during this period. **Methods:** A descriptive study was carried out among 40 elderly who were the members of senior societies of ward number 2 Dhangadhi sub-metropolitans. Elderly of aged 65 years & above were selected purposively for the study. **Result:** The mean age of the elderly were 70 years among them 62% were females. Self-reported chronic illnesses among elderly were hypertension 22%, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases 19%, diabetes 15%, cardiac problems and joint problems 11 %. Further, 21% had hearing impairment and 11% had vision impairment. Concerning the functional impairment, 51% were partially dependent in performing some of the activities of daily living. **Conclusions:** Physical health problems that hypertension, chronic pulmonary diseases, diabetes, joint problems are the common. Functional impairment is higher among increased age elderly. Psychological health problems such as cognitive impairment and depression are identified. Experiences of being abused by the family members are also discerned. Hence, it is recommended to plan health promotional strategies for addressing these old age-related health problems. Elderly people should be encouraged to do activities around house or garden that provides glee and light exercise.

Keywords: Seniors citizens, Stress, Depression, Health.

Introduction

Stress is common mental health problem of elderly population that affects their quality of life. Reaching an old age is natural phenomenon of human life cycle. Elderly people are not a homogeneous it is distinguished based on age, sex, economic, caste, marital status and other criteria's such as living with or without families. Due to lack of proper nutrition, proper health care facilities, low economic status, gender discrimination in labor and property ownership and the pervious productive complication, the present health of elderly women is very poor. Most of them do not go to modern health institutions when they are sick. They first visit traditional healer and then go to modern hospital. So, they do not get proper treatment at proper time when they get sick. Psychological health problems like depression, anxiety, cognitive impairment is more common among old age people. Studies noted that prevalence of depression varied from 20% - 50% depending on regions and settings 12-15. Besides depression, some studies conducted in developed countries revealed that 40% of elderly were being affected by cognitive impairment 16, 17. But on researcher's knowledge, no studies have been carried out with regard to the cognitive impairment among elderly in developing countries like in Nepal.

Everyone goes through stressful moments be it at home or in the workplace. Those who accept that stress will always be a part of life appear to come up with strategies to alleviate the strain. Others are unable to cope and in turn, magnify the tension within. WHO (1947) stated that "Health is a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing not merely absence of diseases or infirmity." Where do you fit on this spectrum? How does the relationship between stress and health play out? This post provides a list of evidence-based tactics you can adopt to win the war against stress so you can live the life you deserve.

Stress in elderly people (65 years and older) is associated with emotional suffering, increases in health expenditures, depression, morbidity, higher risk of suicide, and mortality from other causes. It is common and remains a significant problem for older adults. Major stress was identified by the World Health Organization as the fourth leading cause of disease. The cause of stress is poorly understood, but it is associated with changes in neurochemicals in the brain. Risk factors for stress include genetics, medical conditions, functional decline, disability, social isolation, and psychosocial stressors. These factors are common among elderly people. Significant changes in appetite or weight, restlessness or sluggishness, sleeping disorder, fatigue or loss of energy, lack of concentration and thoughts of death or suicide etc.

Physiological changes occurring due to old age is apparent with a person's external characteristics such as facial expressions, thinning and ripening of hair, creasing of the skin etc. The immunity power also declines. A number of diseases associated with heart, lungs, respiration, starts to appear and become inactive. One has to depend on others for each work. Ageing is also associated with several social problems. Social isolation, poverty, reeducation in family support etc. are a few to name the problems. Stress and anxiety can damage your physical body, creativity, intelligence and overall performance. Toxic hormones released as a result can interfere with executive function, which originates from the pre-frontal cortex in the brain (responsible for social intelligence, emotions and compassion). Numerous studies point out that stress can cause physical and psychological problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, depression, accelerated aging and Alzheimer's disease. The longer stress lingers, the greater the damage it is likely to cause in your body and mind.

Since the old age is accepted as a challenge, it is one of the important aspects of demography. The elderly population has a direct and indirect effect on economic, Social, emotional and other aspects of national development. Many third world countries, like Nepal are included in the list of developing countries. Population of elderly people has become a great problem in the developed countries compared to the developing ones.

Methods

This is a preliminary study report of quantitative portion of proposed mixed method study entitled "Stress problems in Elderly People in Dhangadhi Sub-metropolitan ward no-2 Ramjanaki day care center". The objective was to assess the prevalence of physical and psychosocial health problems among elderly and to determine the factors associated with health problems. This cross-sectional study was conducted at Nepal Senior Citizen Center, Day Care center of Dhangadhi Sub-metropolitan -2 Ramjanaki Tole, in 40 elderly peoples above the age of 60 years. The respondents diagnose with stress and depression care of day camp and receiving appreciative lecturer through respected social leaders. They were enrolled by simple random sampling technique. Relevant demographic and clinical data were assessed with the assistance of social volunteers. Significance of association for categorical analysis was performed by Chi-square test, and logistic regression was modeled to determine the factors associated with stress and depression.

Results

The mean age of the elderly was 70 years among them 62% were females. Self-reported chronic illnesses among elderly were hypertension 22%, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases 19%, diabetes 15%, cardiac problems and joint problems 11 %. Further, 21% had hearing impairment and 11% had vision impairment. Concerning the functional impairment, 51% were partially dependent in performing some of the activities of daily living. Regarding psychological problems, 34% had mild cognitive impairment and 33% had moderate cognitive impairment. In addition, mild depression was identified among 12% of the elderly further, 26% had experienced abuse by their family members. Anxiety and depression are commonly seen among the elderly peoples as they are more susceptible due to the physical and hormonal changes and also due to their social and family relations. Study results shows that about 31% of the respondents were extremely anxious and depressed.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that major health problems among elderly are hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases & diabetes. Hypertension, chronic pulmonary diseases, diabetes, joint problems are the common physical health problems prevalent among elderly. Functional impairment is higher among increased age elderly. Psychological health problems such as cognitive impairment and depression are identified. Experiences of being abused by the family members are also discerned. Hence, it is recommended to plan health promotional strategies for addressing these old age-related health problems. In addition, care of elderly need to be in coordinated with their family members. Stress is a common and significant problem for elderly people. It is related to disability and affects rehabilitation participation, treatment compliance, and outcomes. Elderly people are often reluctant to seek health care for mental health problems. Stress detection and referral are important components of care of affective peoples. It is helpful for screening and referral of suspected cases of stressful elderly people into involved in mental health professionals.

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