Original Research Article

An overview of health concerns among elderly population

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ABSTRACT

Background: Urbanisation, nuclearisation of family, migration, and dual career families are making care of the elderly more and more of a personal and social problem in India. Objective: Assess the concerns about health issues among elderly people. Methodology: Community based cross-sectional study. Results: 64.4% of the elders were treated well and about 22.9% were treated very well during illness. 86.3% were consulted during illness. Son was the care taker in 55.6% of study subjects. 70.6% of elderly were consulted to allopathic practitioners / Govt Hospitals. Conclusion: It is the responsibility of family to look after elderly in respectful manner, especially during illness. The government should frame policies and provide social & economical security to elders.

Introduction

Old age is a normal inevitable, biological phenomenon. Seneca said “Old age is an incurable disease”. You do not heal old age. You protect it; promote it; you extend it[1]. India has acquired the label of an ageing nation with 7.7% of its population being more than 60 years old[2]. Two-thirds live in villages and nearly half of them in poor conditions[3]. Urbanisation, nuclearisation of family, migration, and dual career families are making care of the elderly more and more of a personal and social problem in India[4]. This study was carried out with objective of assessing the concerns about health issues among elderly people.

Results and discussions

Table 1: Attitude of family members towards elders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Very well</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Well</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bad</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Very bad</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was good to observe from the study that 319 (64.4%) of the elders were treated well and about 113(22.9%) were treated very well. Only about 12.7% felt they were neglected. Similar study conducted by Singh et al reported that 26.1% felt neglected by family members, while Prakash et al noted 17.3% having feelings of neglect[5-6].
It was observed from the study that majority of elderly (86.3%) were consulted during illness. These results are comparable to study conducted by Indrani Gupta et al where only about 20 percent did not seek care during illness[7].

Majority of elderly people (55.6%) were taken care by their son, followed by spouse (20.4%) and daughter (16.6%). It was observed that most of consultations were done to allopathic practitioners / government hospitals (70.6%) followed by AYUSH doctors (10.3%) and home remedy (8.3%). Indrani Gupta et al reported that main source of treatment was allopathic doctors followed by indigenous doctors[7]. Most of the treatment seekers went to government facilities, followed by qualified private doctors.

Conclusion

Chinese philosopher Lin-yutang said “Natural man loves his children but only cultured man cares for his parents”. The majority of elders are dependent physically and economically upon their family. It is the responsibility of family to look after elderly in respectful manner, especially during illness. The government should frame policies and provide social & economical security to elders.

Conflict of interest statement
We declare that we have no conflict of interest.

References
