



## Lifestyle practices among senior citizens (age 60plus) living in a rural area of Kerala: A descriptive study

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### ABSTRACT

*A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted using quantitative approach to assess the life style practices of senior citizens living in rural areas. The study was conducted at Nellanad Panchayath in Trivandrum district. 350 senior citizens were recruited for the study using purposive sampling technique. Institutional ethical committee clearance and setting permission from Panchayath authorities has been obtained prior to data collection. Informed consent from each subject has been obtained after ensuring confidentiality of the data been collected. Socio-personal Performa, Modified Physical Activity Scale for Elderly (PASE), Modified Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index and a Rating scale on dietary habits were used to collect data. Results revealed that 81.7% had average physical activity, 63.1% engaged in reading, 93.7% watch TV, (96.6%) engaged in habit of chatting, 66.6% of subjects take a walk for fun, 69.1% walk outside to buy house hold things, 26.3% attend group meeting, (77.7%) had no difficulty sleep and (92.3%) had good dietary habits.*

**KEYWORDS** : life style practices, senior citizens, rural area, descriptive study

### Introduction

Ageing is the progressive and generalized impairment of functions resulting in the loss of adaptive response to stress and in increasing the risk of age related diseases. The overall effect of these alterations is an increase in the probability of dying, which is evident from the rise in age specific death rates. Ageing refers to the process of growing old or developing the appearance and characteristics of old age. The ageing of population is an obvious consequence of the process of demographic transition.

According to the data of the United Nations, the worldwide total number of people aged 60 and older was 629 million (10% of the whole population), and by the year 2050 it will increase to 1.964 billion (21% of the whole population). The percentage of older people in the world population is expected to increase rapidly from 9.5 in 1995 to 20.7 in 2050 and to 30.5 in 2150. In absolute numbers, this will mean an increase from 542 million in 1995 to 1.9 billion in 2050 and to 3.3 billion in 2150.

According to the last census, the population of India in 2011 was over 70 million and 472 thousand people, of them 5 million and 120 thousand (27.7%) were elderly. 53% aged 65 to 74 years, 35% aged 74 to 84 years and (12.1%) aged 85 years and older. The number of centenarians increased by 35%, from 37,306 to 50,454, between 1990 and 2000. In the previous 100 years, the population of older people in India rose from 12 million in 1901 to an estimated 75 million in 2001, 177 million in 2025 and 350 million in 2050. The proportion of older population is expected to rise from 5.5% in 1951 and 7% in 2021.

Kerala's population is ageing more rapidly than any other Indian states. 10% of the population aged over 60 years, an estimated 3 million older people in 2001, which get doubled by 2025. The proportion of the 60+ in the population of Kerala rose steadily in the second half of the last century. From 5.81% in 1901, it moved up to 8.8% in 1991 and 9.79% in 2001, 11.74% in 2011 and 15.63% in 2021.

According to a study undertaken by the International Council for Medical Research (ICMR), on the prevalence rate of coronary heart disease (CHD), in the age group 35-64 years, number of persons with CHD above the age of 60 years was around 9 million. A hospital based survey showed the prevalence of hypertension and IHD to be 40% and 19% respectively.

A cross-sectional study was done to assess the risk of malnutrition among elderly people living at home and receiving regular home-care services in rural Finland using the Mini-Nutritional Assessment (MNA). 178 (65%) out of 272 eligible patients aged 75-94 years by

using MNA structured questionnaire, 3% were malnourished (MNA < 17 points), 48% were at risk for malnutrition (17-23.5 points) and 49% were well nourished.

### Materials and Methods

A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted using quantitative approach to assess the life style practices of senior citizens living in rural areas. The study was conducted at Nellanad Panchayath in Trivandrum district. 350 senior citizens who were aged above 60 years were recruited for the study using purposive sampling technique. Institutional ethical committee clearance and setting permission from Panchayath authorities has been obtained prior to data collection. Informed consent from each subject has been obtained after ensuring confidentiality of the data been collected. Socio-personal Performa which includes eight items related to personal information of elderly such as age, gender, religion, type of family, marital status, type of house, socio economic status and presence of co morbidities was used to collect socio demographic data of subjects. For Assessment of lifestyle practices; Modified Physical Activity Scale for Elderly (PASE) which consists of 7 types of activities such as leisure time activities, outside home walk, moderate physical activities, strenuous physical activities, light house hold works, heavy house works and caring of any dependent persons, Modified Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index which includes 17 items which are combined to form 7 components such as Subjective sleep quality, Sleep latency, Sleep duration, Habitual sleep efficiency, Sleep disturbances, Use of sleeping medication, Day time dysfunction, Rating scale on dietary habits which consists of 11 items including type and frequency of food consumption and a semi structured questionnaire on smoking pattern and alcohol use which consists of 12 questions to assess the smoking pattern and alcohol use in elderly.

### Results:

#### Sample characteristics

(71.1%) belonged to the age group of 60-69 years, 85.1% were Hindus, 99.4% of the subjects lived in their own house and 49.1% belonged to upper lower socio economic class and all subjects belonged to nuclear family. 64.6% subjects were married, 33.4% are widowed and 0.6% were divorced and 1.4% of subjects were unmarried. 37.4% of subjects had one or the other co morbidities and 62.6% of subjects not have any co morbidities. 83.6% of subjects were on regular treatment and 16.4% of them not on regular treatment. DM and HTN were the most prevalent (33.7% and 31.7%), Thyroid diseases and cancer was the least prevalent (2.3% and 1.4%) diseases respectively. Subjects suffered from co morbidities for duration of 6-15 years expect for cancer and thyroid for which the subjects suffer for a period of < 5 years.

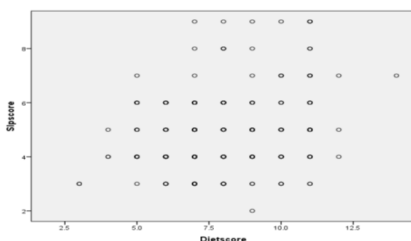
**Life style practices among elderly**

81.7% had average physical activity and 18.3% had poor physical activity, no one had good physical activity. 63.1% engaged in reading, 93.7% watch TV, 1.1% engaged in playing card, 1.7% engaged in stitching and majority of subjects (96.6%) engaged in habit of chatting.66.6% of subjects take a walk for fun, 4% take their grandchildren to school, and 69.1% walk outside to buy house hold things and 26.3% attend group meeting. (77.7%) had no difficulty sleep and (22.3%) had difficulty sleep. (92.3%) had good dietary habits and (7.7%) had poor dietary habits. Majority of subjects (96.6%) were non vegetarian and 3.4% were vegetarian. Majority of subjects (95.4%) do not fast and 4.6% had habit of fasting. 51.1% taken two principal meals per day, 47.4% taken 3 meals per day and 1.4% taken one meal a day. Only 26% of subjects taken >8 cups of fluids per day and majority of subjects (93.1%) consumed at least one serving of dairy products per day, 19.7% consumed two or more servings of legumes/egg products per week, 47.7% consumed meat/ fish/poultry every day, 66.9% consumed two or more servings of vegetables/fruits per day, 0.6% used added salt and sugar in their diet, and 4.3% taken vitamin supplements. 59.90% of subjects were nonsmokers and 40.10% of subjects were current smokers. Majority of subjects (74.6%) were regular smokers and 25.4% of subjects were occasional smokers. Majority of subjects (53.7%) used cigarettes, 46.3% used beedi and majority of subjects (66.2%) started smoking at the age of 20-30 years and 1.50% started smoking at <20 years. Majority of the subjects (79.1%) used > 10 cigarettes in a day, 11.9% used 5-10 cigarettes and 9% of them used < 5 cigarettes in a day. Majority of subjects (75.5%) were nonalcoholic and 24.5% were alcoholic and majority of subjects (73.1%) consumed alcohol occasionally and 26.8% have regular drinking habit. Majority of subjects (70.7%) started taking alcohol in the age between 20-30 years, 24.4% of subjects between the ages 30-40 years and 4.9% of subjects started drinking at age below 20 years.

Association between physical activity and selected socio demographic variables

- A significant association between physical activity and age (p<0.001), physical activity and marital status (p<0.01) and physical activity and gender (p<0.05).
- There was a significant association between sleeping pattern and religion, (p<0.01).
- There was no association between dietary habits and selected demographic variables

**Correlation between sleeping pattern and dietary habits**



**Figure 1: Correlation between sleep score and dietary pattern score.**

Figure 1 shows that there is a weak positive correlation (r = 0.270) between sleeping pattern and dietary habits significant at p<0.01 level

**Discussion**

The present study was intended to assess the life style practices in elderly above 60. The major findings of the study are discussed in relation to the findings of the other research studies.

The present study showed that more than half of the subjects (71.1%) belonged to the age group of 60-69 years, 22.9% belonged to the age group of 70-79 years and 6% belonged to the age group of 80 years and above, this finding is supported by 2011 census in

India which shows that 53% of aged were between 65-74 years, 35% aged 74-84 years and 12.1% aged 85 years and older.

The present study revealed that 81.7% had average physical activity and 18.3% had poor physical activity, no one had good physical activity, this finding is supported by findings of another study conducted by National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in 2004, which reported that 12% of Americans 75 years of age and older perform good level of activity. Two-third of adults between 65 and 75 years of age are inactive.

This study revealed that of subjects (77.7%) have no difficulty sleep and (22.3%) have difficulty sleep, this finding is contradictory to the findings of an observational study conducted in Banaras Hindu University, which reported that 39% found early insomnia 45% were of chronic insomnia. The present study showed that 92.3% had good dietary habits and 7.7% had poor dietary habits, this finding is congruent with the findings of another study conducted in Kerala, which showed that more than 75% of subjects have good dietary habits and attains good health.

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