



## The Health Problems of the Elderly Patients in a Rural Village of Jammu & Kashmir

### Medicine

**Naiyma Choudhary**

Health & Family Welfare, Jammu & Kashmir, 180001, India

**Mohd Rasheed**

Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Command Hospital, Lucknow, 226002, India

### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Population ageing is the most significant emerging demographic phenomenon in the world today. In India, the elderly constitute 8% of the population at present. Expectation of life at birth for males and females has increased more in recent years. Projection beyond 2016 made by United Nations has indicated that 21% of the Indian population will be 60+ by 2050. Rising numbers of older people will put new and increasing demands on the health care system. This study was done with the aim to understand various health problems of elderly patients in a rural village of Jammu & Kashmir.

**Material & methods:** This was a cross sectional, prospective study carried for a period of about 4 months. A total of 428 patients above the age of 60 were included in the study.

**Results:** The percent of patients in the age group of 60-75 was 92.52%. The female patients were more than male patients at 53.04% compared to 46.96%.

**Conclusion:** This study describes the morbidity in elderly patients of a rural village in Jammu & Kashmir. The data collected will be helpful in formulation of policies aimed at improving the health care needs of this group of population.

### KEYWORDS:

Elderly, health problems, prevalence

### Introduction

Ageing is a natural process and most significant emerging demographic phenomenon the world over. By 2050, the proportion of older persons 60 years and above is projected to rise to 21.1 per cent, which will be two billion in number.<sup>1</sup> With this rapid expansion of elderly population group, there is bound to be an increase in the various social, economic and health problems faced by this population. This has given rise to the fact that there is a need to dwell upon various issues related to ageing and to take timely and effective measures for improving the quality of life of elderly population.

With the ever improving medical sciences, there has been a significant increase in life expectancy globally leading to increased percentage of elderly population. In India, two-thirds of the elderly population lives in villages.<sup>2</sup>

There have been various studies addressing the plethora of issues of elderly in India which have identified the lacunas and also suggested remedial measures to mitigate the problem.

This study was undertaken in the same light to assess the various health problems of elderly patients in a rural village of Jammu & Kashmir.

### Material and methods

This study was carried out in elderly patients attending primary health centre of a rural village of Jammu & Kashmir from 1st January 2017 to 20th April 2017. A total of 428 patients equal to or above the age of 60 years who attended the primary health centre were included in the study. The consent from patients was sought after informing them of the study protocol.

MS excel 2007 was used for statistical analysis along with mean and percentage statistics for interpreting the data.

### Results

Table 1 describes the baseline characteristics of the patients along with their educational qualification and socioeconomic status. Majority of the patients 42.99% were in the age group of 60-65 years followed by 26.44% in the 66-70 years. There were 7.48% patients in

the age group of >75 years. Female patients were more as compared to male patients at 53.04% versus 46.96%.

S. No	Age in years	Number	Percent
1	60-65	184	42.99
2	66-70	114	26.64
3	71-75	98	22.89
4	>75	32	7.48
5	<b>Gender</b>		
5.1	Male	201	46.96
5.2	Female	227	53.04
6	<b>Educational qualification</b>		
6.1	Illiterate	260	60.77
6.2	Primary	104	24.29
6.3	Middle	47	10.98
6.4	High & above	17	3.96
7	<b>Socioeconomic status</b>		
7.1	I	19	4.44
7.2	II	62	14.49
7.3	III	122	28.50
7.4	IV	198	46.26
7.5	V	27	6.31

Table 2 shows various symptoms with which patients reported to the primary health centre. Among these, decreased eyesight had the highest percent of patients at 27.80% followed by general body weakness in 17.29%. Other symptoms included body aches, fever, joint pains, decreased hearing, productive cough, pain abdomen, headache and allergy.

**Table 2: Symptoms of the patients**

S. No	Complaint	Number	Percentage
1	Body aches	58	13.55

2	General weakness	74	17.29
3	Fever	35	8.18
4	Joint pains	47	10.98
5	Decreased eyesight	119	27.80
6	Decreased hearing	6	1.40
7	Productive cough	22	5.14
8	Pain abdomen	19	4.44
9	Headache	27	6.31
10	Allergy	21	4.91
	Total	428	100

Table 3 gives system-wise distribution of morbidity in these patients. Cataract was the leading associated morbid condition in 25.70% of patients followed by musculoskeletal problems at 21.50%. Hypertension was present in 18.92% of the patients. Other morbidities were diabetes mellitus(5.37%), respiratory ailments (8.64%), gastrointestinal (8.88%), genitourinary complaints( 4.45%), neurological involvement (0.93%) and depression (5.61%).

**Table 3: System wise morbidity of the patients**

S. No	Morbidity	Number	Percentage
1	Hypertension	81	18.92
2	Diabetes Mellitus	23	5.37
3	Respiratory	37	8.64
4	Gastrointestinal	38	8.88
5	Genitourinary	19	4.45
6	Musculoskeletal	92	21.50
7	Neurological	4	0.93
8	Depression	24	5.61
9	Cataract	110	25.70
	Total	428	100

### Discussion

Accelerated rate of urbanization is leading to more elderly population being left to care for themselves since younger generation has tendency to migrate to economically more satisfying areas. This is evident from the fact that a large proportion of patients reporting to primary health Centres are in the elderly age group.

Many other factors like illiteracy and low socioeconomic status further aggravate the problems of elderly patients.

Various other studies too have highlighted similar health problems in the elderly patients.

In a multicentric study done by GOI it was seen that 45.4% elderly patients had cataract, 21.6% had hearing problems, 13.4% had urinary complaints and 1.4% had Parkinson's disease.<sup>3</sup> Kishore S et al in their study reported hypertension as the most common morbidity at 41.4%, musculoskeletal problems(36.8%), eye problems at 27.7%.<sup>4</sup> In another study by Jacob A et al 68% patients had visual problems, 43.4% had joint pains and 8.3% had diabetes mellitus.<sup>5</sup>

Kumar D et al in their study have revealed similar results with 56% patients having musculoskeletal problems, 34.1% having hypertension and 25.4% having cataract.<sup>6</sup>

Similar results have been seen with a number of other studies conducted across India.<sup>7-9</sup>

### Conclusion

This study highlights various common health problems of the elderly patients living in rural areas. There is a need to do more such studies and on a large scale to assess the prevalence of different health

problems in rural areas of J&K. Policy makers must also concentrate on the basic issues concerning elderly patients like reluctance to seek medical care and poor compliance. The data from these studies will prove to be of benefit in formulating policies aimed at improving the health care of elderly population.

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