



A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY TO KNOW THE HEALTH CARE SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF ELDERLY POPULATION IN URBAN AREA OF DISTRICT-HAPUR

Community Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Background: Health seeking behavior of elderly is a complex phenomenon, particularly in an Indian community, and depends on a number of factors.

Objectives: To study the health care seeking behavior of elderly population.

Material and methods: A study was carried out in geriatric age group in the urban field practice areas of Department of Community Medicine, Saraswathi Institute of Medical Sciences, district-Hapur between March 2014 to Feb 2015.

Result: A total of 319 elderly were assessed for their health seeking behaviour regarding present illness. Among these 86.8% sought health care. Majority of elderly took treatment mainly from private facility (54.2%) and prefer allopathic medication (89.9%).

Conclusion: The lack of social support system and level of overall general health education in particular have an impact on the health-seeking behavior of the elderly.

KEYWORDS

Health seeking behavior, geriatric, allopathic medication.

INTRODUCTION

Health - seeking behavior is defined as "any activity undertaken by individuals who perceive themselves, to have a health problem or to be ill for the purpose of finding an appropriate remedy" [1].

Health seeking behavior of elderly is a complex phenomenon, particularly in a rural Indian community, and depends on a number of factors such as economic dependence on others, attitudinal problems, inaccessibility to health care facilities, loss of independent decision making status and other social problems apart from the other physiological problems of ageing [2].

A multivariate analysis of the determinants of the health of the elderly in India revealed that economic dependence, living arrangement, chronic illnesses and social issues were the major problems faced by the elderly [3].

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE

To know the health care seeking behavior of elderly population.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Inclusion criteria-

1. Person aged 60 years and above living in the study area
2. Elderly persons who were willing to participate and have any illness.

Exclusion criteria-

1. People aged less than 60 years
2. Elderly persons who does not have any illness.

Sample size and Methodology:

A cross sectional study was carried out in geriatric age group aged 60 years and above in the urban field practice areas of Department of Community Medicine, Saraswathi Institute of Medical Sciences, District-Hapur. By using systematic sampling technique a preliminary listing of elderly having one or more illness was carried out at UHTC, Hapur. So a total of 319 elderly surveyed were suffering from one or more illness.

A semi structured Questionnaire consisted of- General information, socio-demographic details and Health care seeking behavior (includes question on health care sought or not, type of health care providers and medication).

Data analysis was done by using statistical SPSS 20 version.

Ethical Approval for the study was obtained from Institutional Ethical Committee before starting the study.

OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS

A total of 319 elderly were assessed for their health seeking behaviour regarding present illness.

Health care seeking behaviours in study participants

Table 1 revealed that out of 319 elderly who were suffering from present illness, 277(86.8%) sought health care while 42(13.2%) elderly do not seek any health care for their illness. Among 277 elderly who sought health care, elderly males were more than females (89.6%, 83.6%).

Table 1: Health care seeking behaviours in study participants

Characteristics	Health seeking behavior N (%)		Total N=319
	Sought health care N=277	Did not seek health care N=42	
Male	155(89.6)	18(10.4)	173(100)
Female	122(83.6)	24(16.4)	146(100)
Total	277(86.8)	42(13.2)	319(100)

* Figures in parenthesis are percentages of row total

Health care seeking behaviour according to socio-demographic characteristics

Table 2 shows that, health care seeking practice of morbid elderly decreased with increasing age as it was 90.6% in the 'young-old', 85.5% in the 'old-old' while 75.0% in the

Characteristics	Health Seeking Behavior N (%)		Total N=319	Chi square test	
	Sought Health Care N= 277	Did not sought health care N=42		χ ² Value	p-value
Age					
60-69 years	135(90.6)	14(9.4)	149		
70-79 years	118(85.5)	20(14.5)	138		
> 80 years	24(75.0)	8(25.0)	32	5.98	0.05*

Sex						
Male	155(89.6)	18(10.4)	173			
Female	122(83.6)	24(16.4)	146	2.52	0.11	
Marital Status						
Married	165(90.7)	17(9.3)	182			
Widowed/Separated	112(81.8)	25(18.2)	137	5.42	0.02*	
Religion						
Hindu	205(88.0)	28(12.0)	233			
Non Hindu	72(83.7)	14(16.3)	86	0.99	0.31	
Education						
Literate	177(90.3)	19(9.7)	196			
Illiterate	100(81.3)	23(18.7)	123	5.36	0.02*	
Current Occupation						
Employed	110(91.7)	10(8.3)	120			
Unemployed	167(83.9)	32(16.1)	199	3.93	0.04*	
Socio economic Status						
Upper class	46(90.2)	5(9.8)	51			
Lower class	231(86.2)	37(13.8)	268	0.60	0.43	

*p value < 0.05(sig) Result was statistically significant by chi-squared analysis, Figures in parenthesis are percentages of row total

Type of health care facility sought by study participants

Table 3 shows that out of 277, majority took treatment from private facility (54.2%), followed by public facility (43.0%) while 2.9% were taking self-care. A higher percentage of elderly belonging to the 80 years and above age category sought treatment from a government facility as compared to elderly in other age groups. No marked differentials by sex and marital status were observed.

Marginal difference was observed in the type of facility sought by Hindus and Non Hindus. As the level to education and socioeconomic status increases, the elderly tend to seek treatment from private providers rather than government health facilities. A higher percentage of elderly who were employed sought treatment from private health providers.

Table 3: Type of health care facility sought by study participants

Characteristics	Health Seeking Behavior			Total N=277
	Private facility N (%)	Public facility N (%)	Over the counter N (%)	
Age				
60-69 years	82(60.7)	50(37.0)	3(2.2)	135
70-79 years	64(54.2)	55(46.6)	2(1.7)	118
> 80 years	7(29.2)	14(58.3)	3(12.5)	24
Sex				
Male	96(61.9)	56(36.1)	2(1.9)	155
Female	54(44.3)	63(51.6)	5(4.1)	122
Marital Status				
Married	99(60.0)	63(38.2)	3(1.8)	165
Widowed/Separated	51(45.5)	56(50.0)	5(4.5)	112
Religion				
Hindu	114(55.6)	84(41.0)	7(3.4)	205
Non Hindu	36(50.0)	35(48.6)	1(1.4)	72
Education				
Literate	112(63.3)	61(34.5)	4(2.3)	177
Illiterate	38(38.0)	58(58.0)	4(4.0)	100
Current Occupation				
Employed	72(65.5)	38(34.5)	0(0.0)	110
Unemployed	78(46.7)	81(48.5)	8(4.3)	167
Socio economic Status				
Upper class	44(95.5)	1(2.2)	1(2.2)	46
Lower class	106(45.9)	118(51.1)	7(3.0)	231
Total	150(54.2)	119(43.0)	8(2.9)	277

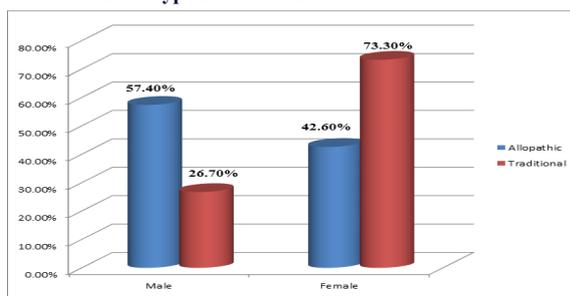
*Figures in parenthesis are percentages of row total

Type of medication preferred by study participants

Figure 1 revealed that majority of elderly preferred Allopathic medications (89.9%) followed by traditional medication (5.4%).

It shows that Allopathic medicines were preferred by elderly males as compared to females (57.4% vs. 26.7%). Traditional medicines were preferred by elderly females as compared to males (73.3% vs. 42.6%).

Reference for the type of medication



DISCUSSION

The present cross sectional study was aimed to know the health seeking behavior of elderly people of age group 60 years and above in urban field practice area under the Department of Community Medicine, Saraswathi Institute Of Medical Sciences, Hapur.

The study consists of 319 elderly subjects having one or more illnesses.

HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF THE ELDERLY WITH RESPECT TO PRESENT ILLNESSES

In present study 319 aged individuals had complaint of present illness. When interviewed regarding their treatment seeking behavior for their present illness, it was found that 277 individuals (86.8%) sought health care from various sources and remaining (13.2%) did not seek any kind of health care. The observation of our study was consistent with the findings of Human Development Indicator Survey Gupta et al [4] and Shalika Sharma et al (2012) [5].

In present study higher proportion of elderly males sought health care as compared to elderly females (89.6% vs. 83.6%). In Indian society women are generally neglected with respect to all issues and health being no exception. Even among elderly women this trend continued and so it is no surprise that a lesser proportion of elderly females sought health care as compared to elderly males.

Among the elderly who sought health care a majority (89.9%) opted for allopathic medicine care. This could be because of the belief that allopathic medicine acts faster than other forms of medicines. Sharma Shalika et al (2012) [5] in her study in the general population observed that the allopathic system was preferred to all other forms of medicine.

In present study majority of the elderly males approached clinic (61.9%) while a higher proportion of elderly females sought traditional medicine (73.3%). Seeking Traditional Medicine fits the conceptual framework of the 4 'A's model of health seeking behavior appropriately (i.e. it is affordable, acceptable, available and accessible). This finding corresponds with a study conducted by Dilip T.R. et al [6].

In our study, 54.2% of elderly sought treatment from private practitioner and private hospital. This observation of our study was consistent with the findings of Bayapareddy Narapureddy et al (2012) [7] and Jain M. et al (2006) [1]. In present study we observed that 43.0% of elderly people used Government hospital as a source of treatment. Present most of elderly went to private facility which may be due to variation in geographical areas.

In present study few of the elderly also said that they do not seek care because nobody accompanies them to the health care facility. This again indicates the lack of social support system for the elderly.

Health perceptions, socio-economic factors, reduced physical mobility, attitudes towards taking pills, and level of overall education in general and health education in particular have an impact on the health-seeking behavior of the elderly.

CONCLUSION

Among those 319 elderly who reported illness, 86.8% sought health care. Majority of elderly took treatment from private facility (54.2%). A higher proportion of elderly 89.9% sought allopathic care for their illness.

Among the elderly, young old and old-old, male sex, ever married, Hindu, literate, employed and belonging to upper socioeconomic class were found to be associated with better Health Seeking Behavior with respect to present illnesses.

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