UNMET NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY IN A RURAL POPULATION OF MEERUT

Deptt. of Community Medicine, L.L.R.M. Medical College, Meerut

Abstract:
Research question: What are the psychosocial needs of elderly and availability and utilization of Geriatric welfare services.
Objectives: 1. To assess the psychosocial needs of elderly in a rural area.
2. To assess the availability and utilization of Geriatric welfare services.
Study design: Cross-sectional study.
Setting: Subcentre villages under Rural Health Training Centre, Daurala of Department of Community Medicine, L.L.R.M. Medical College, Meerut.
Participants: 354 persons aged 60 years and above.
Statistical analysis: Proportions.
Results: Out of 354 elderly studied 58.5% were financially dependent, 69.5% were found enjoying their leisure time at home, 55.1% were having sad attitude towards their lives, 46.3% were not aware of and 96% had never utilized any Geriatric welfare service. In 59.2% of cases the distance of government health facilities was more than 3 kms.
Conclusions: The financial and social needs of the elderly should be fulfilled by preserving traditional joint family system, promoting light home based occupations, lifestyle changes for healthy ageing and by increasing awareness and utilization of geriatric welfare services as well as accessibility to government health services.

Key Words: Geriatric problems, Elderly population, Geriatric services, Unmet needs, Social geriatrics

Introduction:
In the era of population ageing, the elderly population being the fastest growing section of population, needs due consideration. By 2020 India will harbour about 158 million elderly, second largest population of elderly world wide after China (250 million).

Material and Methods:
In all, 360 persons aged 60 years and above were selected for study taking estimated prevalence of morbidity 52% as per NSSO (1998) with confidence interval 95% and precision of 10% selecting 15 individuals from each of the 24 subcentre villages under Rural Health Training Centre, Daurala of Department of Community Medicine, L.L.R.M. Medical College, Meerut.

A total of 354 (98.3%) elderly were studied from August 2001 to June 2002 excluding 6 (1.7%) who were non-cooperative/non-responsive. House to house visits were made and information was collected on a predesigned and pretested schedule.

Results:
Table 1: Age and sex wise distribution of study population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group (years)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>16(9.6)</td>
<td>47(25.1)</td>
<td>63(17.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>49(29.3)</td>
<td>55(29.4)</td>
<td>104(29.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>59(35.3)</td>
<td>44(23.5)</td>
<td>103(29.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>18(10.8)</td>
<td>13(7.0)</td>
<td>31(8.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>25(15.0)</td>
<td>28(15.0)</td>
<td>53(15.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>167(47.2)</td>
<td>187(52.8)</td>
<td>354(100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 354 elderly studied, 47.2% were in the age group of 60-69 years, 37.8% in 70-79 years and rest 15.0% were in age group of 80 years and above. The females (52.8%) outnumbered the males (47.2%).
About half (46.3%) elderly were not aware of any geriatric welfare services and 96.0% of them had never utilized any of the geriatric welfare services.

It is also evident from Table III that 59% of subjects had to travel more than 3 kilometers for government health facilities.

Discussion:

Age group 60-69 years (47.2%) constituted the major fraction of population followed by 70-79 years (37.8%) and above 80 years of age (15.0%) in comparison to 68.3%, 23.3% and 8.3% respectively at Varanasi¹, and 63.5%, 29.5% and 7.0% respectively in rural area of Tamil Nadu².

The sex distribution showed that females outnumbered (52.8%) the males (47.2%) similar to 55% and 45% respectively at Wardha³ and 52.3% and 47.7% respectively in rural area of South India⁴.

Financial dependence was found in 58.5% elderly similar to the findings of NSSO⁴ 52nd round (51.1%) and Elango² (66%). 32.2% of subjects were feeling lonely, 33.9% found their family members ignored their advice and 24.8% had no social contact outside home comparable with the findings of Pradhan et al⁶ being 58.7%, 27% and 11.7% respectively.

The major needs of elderly were found to be economic dependence, ignorance to their advice, sad attitude towards life, loneliness, distant government health facilities and lack of awareness as well as utilization of geriatric welfare services. Therefore, it is required to recognize these problems and carry out regular IEC activities to increase the awareness for more utilization of geriatric welfare services.

References: