A Study to Assess the Nutritional Status Among the Elderly Population in the Selected Setting

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ABSTRACT

The elderly population is increasing in India. Healthy population of all age devote to the healthy nation. Food is a vital component of survival. Old age people are at major risk of many health problems. Prevalence of malnutrition increases the risk of health problems to the elders. The present study anticipates at assessing the nutritional status of the elderly population living at Perumatty grama pachayat at Palakkad district Kerala India. 100 old age people living in the selected area were selected by using convenient sampling technique. The mini nutritional status assessment questionnaire was utilized to assess the nutritional status of the elderly population. The results reported that around 52% of the elders were in the high-risk category of malnutrition. 24% were found to be malnourished and only 24% were in the normal nutritional status. There was a symbolic association found between the height and the nutritional status of the elders. Hence, malnutrition is popular among the elders there is a requirement to develop an intervention protocol to improve the nutritional status of the elders.

Keywords: elderly population, nutritional status

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INTRODUCTION

Food is an essential or vital component of survival. Nutrition is the basic need of all human beings irrespective of age. A well-balanced diet is highly essential to lead a healthy life. Daily diet of an individual should contain all essential nutrients based on the age and activity status. There is no common formula of nutritional requirements for all population. There are various factors which determine the nutritional requirement. Aged population of India grows day by day. Currently around 8% of the total population is above the age of 60 in India and it is estimated to raise above 12% by the year 2015 [1]. There is a demographic transition took place in India with huge number of elderly population [3]. Aging causes more physiological changes in human beings. Physical disabilities, lack of appetite, losing interest in taking a well-balanced diet, associated illness, etc. makes the elderly population not to concentrate on what they are supposed to eat. Physiological, psychosocial, economic and personal factors make the elderly population vulnerable for malnutrition or under nutrition. In the society dietary needs of the elderly population is neglected. Naturally food intake reduces as the age progresses make them vulnerable for malnutrition. Aging is not the challenge to individuals and families but also to the society. Studies had reported that the prevalence of malnutrition among the elderly population is around 33% [2]. The economic and other contributions from the elderly population to the society are less but the health care expenditures for them is more. Healthy aging is a right of every individual. Maintaining an

appropriate nutritional status will prevent many illness and promotes healing. Hence, the present study aimed at assessing the nutritional status of the elderly population in the selected community setting.

"What people eat is not calories, but food and consideration of fads, flavors and variations of appetite can make nonsense of dietician theory"

Objectives
[1] Assess the nutritional status of the elderly population
[2] Find the association between the nutritional status and the selected demographic variables

Hypotheses
[1] Malnutrition is prevalent among the elderly population
[2] There is an association between malnutrition and the selected demographic variables

METHODOLOGY
Study design: Descriptive survey design was adopted to assess the nutritional status of the elderly population.

Study setting: The study was conducted in the Perumatty grama panchayat of Palakkad district at Kerala. The total geographical area of the village is 1737 hectares. As per 2011 census the population of the village is 8150.

Population of the study: Elderly population aged above 60 years living in the Perumatty grama panchayat are the population of this study.

Sample size and selection: 100 old age people who fulfil the inclusion criteria are selected as samples by using convenient sampling technique.

Inclusive criteria:
(1) Male and female aged above 60 years

(2) Who are willing to participate in the study
(3) Elders who are available at the time of data collection
(4) Elders who can obey the commands

Exclusion criteria:
(1) Elders above the age of 80 years
(2) Elders with major illness
(3) Elders who are not willing to participate in the study

Tool and method of data collection: Structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. The tool contains two parts. Part A is about the demographic data of the elders. Part B was a mini nutritional assessment tool for the elderly population. Geront short of mini nutritional status assessment tool was used to assess the nutritional status of the elders. The maximum score is 30 and the minimum is 0. Score between 24 and 30 indicate normal nutritional status. Score of 17 to 23.5 indicate risk of malnutrition. Score below 17 indicate malnourished status. Structured interview method was adopted to collect the data. This is a simple and rapid assessment tool for assessing the nutritional status of the elderly population [3].

Data analysis: The data were analyzed by using percentage analysis to rule out the prevalence of malnutrition and chi square test to find the association between the nutritional status and the selected demographic variables.

RESULTS
The collected data were assessed. The results reveal that majority of the elders were female between the age group of 60 and 70 years. The average weight was 45 kg. The nutritional status was classified based on the scores obtained in the nutritional assessment scale. It was observed that only 24% of the elders were in the normal nutritional status, around

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52% of the elders were in the risk of malnutrition category. It was also noticed that 24% of them were malnourished. The calculated χ^2 value is 6.5 for the association between the height and nutritional status. Hence the calculated value is higher than the table value it can be said that the there is an association between height and nutritional status.

There was no association noticed with other variables like age, gender and weight (Figure 1, Table 1).

Research studies found that there are more elders are at the risk category than who had already developed malnutrition which supports the result of present study where more elders are in the risk category [2].
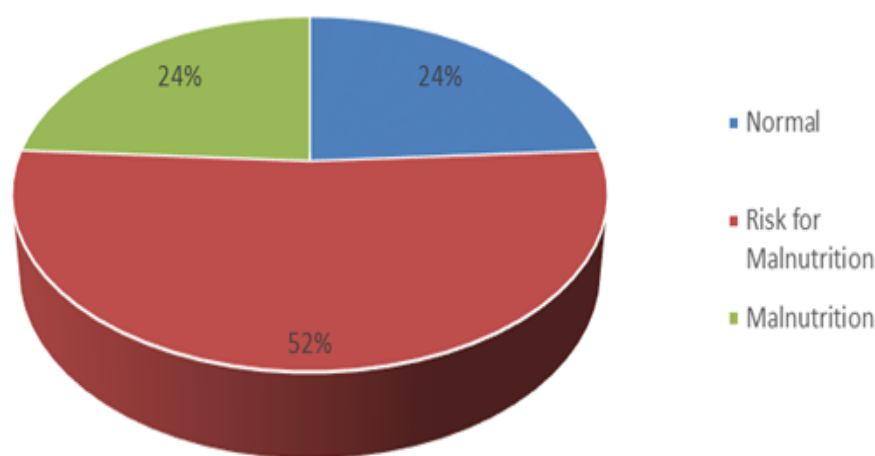

Fig. 1. Distribution of samples according to the nutritional status.

Table 1. Distribution of samples according to the demographic variables. N = 100.

S no	Demographic variable	Percentage
1	Age 60 – 70 years 70 – 80 years 80 – 90 years	 60% 26% 14%
2	Gender Male Female	 48% 52%
3	Weight 35 – 45 kg 45 – 55 kg 56 – 65 kg 65 – 75 kg Above 75 kg	 28% 52% 12% 4% 4%
4	Height 110 – 150 cm 150 – 160 cm 160 – 170 cm Above 170 cm	 18% 70% 10% 2%

CONCLUSION

Malnutrition among the elderly population is common but the magnitude is under reported. There is no relevant information of exact nutritional status of the elderly population in India [2]. The result of this study reveals that the malnutrition is prevalent among the elderly population. Majority of them are in the risk category. It sends an alarming signal to the health care professionals to initiate measures to improve the nutritional status of the elders. There are evidences to say that good nutritional status either prevents or delays the degeneration process of an individual [3]. Hence it can be concluded that nutrition is an essential component for healthy aging.

LIMITATIONS

The study was limited to assess only the nutritional status of the elderly population living in the Perumatty grama panchayat.

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