

Assessment of nutritional status of the Elderly in government and non government Elderly homes in Colombo-Sri Lanka

G. Pathmanathan,

Food & Nutrition unit, Dept. of Microbiology, University of Kelaniya,
G Gunawardena (Former Deputy Director, MRI, Colombo)

ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to determine the nutritional status, dietary adequacy and presence of physical defects of the elderly in four Elderly homes (one Government home & 3 homes run by Non Government Organizations) in the Colombo district, so that we could make recommendations to improve the care of the elderly in these 4 homes.

The four homes were chosen purposively as representing inmates of the elderly living in homes in Sri Lanka. The sample consists of 175 elderly. All inmates of these homes were chosen for the study, except those who could not physically participate.

A pre-tested questionnaire was used to obtain personal data, anthropometrics data (height & weight), consumption patterns, nutritional adequacy (using individual consumption data) & the presence of physical defects. The individual intake was taken from the food plate given to the inmate were inspected and all were found to be equal in quantity & quality and also the records for a seven day period of food purchased was obtained from register by the matron/wardens. The presence of physical defects was obtained from diagnosis cards given to the inmates from institutes where these investigations were done.

The nutritional status was determined by calculating the Body Mass Index (BMI). The results were as follows;

- (1) 54.6% of Males & 45.0% of Females were normal (BMI 20 - 25)
- (2) 28.1% of Males & 31.53% of Females were overweight (BMI 25- 30)
- (3) 1.56% of Males & 2.70% of Females were obese (BMI >30)
- (4) 15.62% of Males & 17.1% of Females were underweight (BMI <20)

The nutrient adequacy for energy, protein & calcium were above the RDA except in one elderly home. This could be due to over-reporting by the beneficiaries. The BMI was significantly related to energy adequacy. (using the chi-square test of significance). $P = 0.711$

The commonest physical defects were Osteoporosis, Dental disease, Eye defects & Diabetes mellitus. The incidence of Heart disease, Ear problems & Gastric Ulcers were comparably low.

We advice the four homes to make use of the services of a visiting dietician, in order to guide the matron regarding their purchase the food items and the distribution of the food & a visiting Medical officer is needed to look after the physical status of the elderly & also a visiting social service officer is needed to look after the social requirement of the elderly.

Keywords: Elderly, Nutritional status, Nutrient adequacy, Physical defects.