



Original Research Article

Prevalence of Depression among the Individuals Staying at Old Age Home

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Abstract

Background: Individuals living in old age homes faces diminished physical capacity, anxiety over entrusting oneself to a new environment, separation from the family, problems of adjustment with rigid and tight schedules and frequent encounters with ailments and death in the institution.

Aims: To find prevalence of depression among the individuals staying at old age home.

Materials & Methods: The present cross sectional study was carried among the individuals staying in old age home ambphalla, Jammu, J&K. There were about 48 individuals staying in this old age home. Various parameters like age, sex, education, marital status and comorbid physical illness were recorded in a separate sheet. All the individuals were assessed by Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS).

Results: The study showed that prevalence of depression was 70.8% among individuals residing in old age home. About 86.7% individuals who were above 70 years of age were depressed. 87.5% females were suffering from depression whereas only 62.5% of males were suffering from depression. Participants who were widowed had 100% prevalence of depression. Total of 83.9% participants who had comorbid physical illness had depression. Prevalence of depression was also higher among illiterate participants.

Conclusion: From present study, it has been concluded that there was high prevalence of depression among the individuals residing in old age home. Depression was more in those who were above 70 years old, females, widowed, uneducated and had comorbid physical illnesses.

Keywords: Depression, Old age home, Prevalence.

Introduction

One of time related change that occurs throughout life is aging which is characterized by decline in functional efficiency and decreased capability to compensate and recover from stress. It is a

universal, normal and inevitable change in all aspects of life including physical, social and psychological aspects which takes place in an individual even with the best of nutrition and health care. The number of older population of

both developed and developing countries has considerably increased in the 20th century due to advancement and improvement of latest technology in medical field.¹

India is witnessing a rapid increment in aged population constituting about 8.2% of the national population. In India the traditional concept of family was to provide social support to older, dependent and ill family members but this concept has changed due to globalization, modernization and urbanization. In the recent times, urbanization has lead to diminishing societal values, change in the economic structure and weakening the importance of joint family. The younger generation of present times are searching for new identity with social and economic independence resulting in older generation being caught between the decline in traditional values and absence of adequate social security. In this dynamic era, where the erosion of joint family traditional practice and social values occurring in one hand and the aging of population rapidly increasing in other hand, the concept of old age homes proved to be helpful for elderly. At present there are about 1018 geriatric homes in India of which 427 homes are free of cost while 153 are on payment and stay basis whereas 146 homes have both pay as well as free stay facilities. However detailed information about 292 homes is not available.²

Elderly living in old age homes faces diminished physical capacity, anxiety over entrusting oneself to a new environment, separation from the family, problems of adjustment with rigid and tight schedules and frequent encounters with ailments and death in the institution.³ Depression is a common condition in older people affecting about 17-30 % peoples above the age of 65 years in community.¹ Hence the present study was conducted with the objective to find prevalence of depression among the individuals staying at old age home.

Methodology

The present institutional cross sectional study was carried among the individuals staying in old age home ambphalla, Jammu, J&K. There were about

48 individuals staying in this old age home. Various parameters like age, sex, education, marital status and comorbid physical illness were recorded in a separate sheet. All the individuals were assessed by Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS).⁴

Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS): This scale was first developed in 1982 by Yesavage JA and others. It is a 30-item self-report assessment used to identify depression in the elderly. The scale consists of 30 questions and each question is answered as yes or no. Response to each question is scored as either 0 or 1 point. Severity of depression by the use of this scale is rated as follow:

- normal 0-9,
- mild depressives 10-19,
- severe depressives 20-30.

Statistical Method

Analysis of data was done using statistical software MS Excel / SPSS version 17.0 for windows. Data presented as percentage (%) as discussed appropriate for quantitative and qualitative variables.

Observations and Results

In the present study prevalence of depression was 70.8% as 34 out of 48 elderly residing in old age home were depressed.

Table 1 shows that 86.7% participants who were above 70 years and 63.6% participants below 70 years were depressed. 87.5% of female participants were suffering from depression whereas 62.5% of male participants were suffering from depression. About 79.3% participants who were uneducated were suffering from depression whereas only 57.9% of educated participants had depression. Participants who were widowed had 100% prevalence of depression. Table 1 also depicts that 83.9% participants who had comorbid physical illness had depression whereas only 47.1% participant without any physical illness were depressed.

Table 1 shows prevalence of depression among residents of old age home according to age, gender, educational status, marital status and history of physical illness

	Total number	Depressed	Normal
Age			
Below 70	33	21(63.6%)	12(36.4%)
Above 70	15	13(86.7%)	2(13.3%)
Gender			
Males	32	20(62.5%)	12(37.5%)
Females	16	14(87.5%)	2(12.5%)
Educational status			
Educated	19	11(57.9%)	8(42.1%)
Uneducated	29	23(79.3%)	6(20.7%)
Marital status			
Widowed	46	34(73.9%)	12(26.1%)
Married	2	0	2(100%)
History of physical illness			
Yes	31	26(83.9%)	5(16.1%)
No	17	8(47.1%)	9(52.9%)
Total	48	34(70.8%)	14(29.2%)

Discussion

The changing scenario of demography and population projections of India shows that the growth rate among older adults are faster here in India than the other regions of the world. This rapid growth in the proportion of older adults has important consequences and implications. Some of the areas which were affected include family composition, living arrangement, health related issues, migration and housing. As a result of these present situations and socio-demographic evolutions, older adults at times are forced to shift from their own homes to institutions which were called old age homes.³

In the present study prevalence of depression was 70.8%. In Indian culture, majority of the elderly lives in joint families which provide better care, love, respect and financial securities to the elderly which acts as protective barriers against depression.⁴ Sudden drift of the elderly from their homes to old age homes may remove these protective barriers which may predisposes them to significant distress leading to depression.³ Our finding is in accordance with Maktha S and Kumar MV who observed that 77% individuals staying in old age homes were suffering from depression.¹ Rao AV and Madhvan T had also reported that depression was present in 67% residents of old age homes.⁶ Similarly Kumar P et al had also observed

that prevalence of depression in old age home residents was 65.4%.³ Moreover Sethi V et al had also found that the elderly subjects who were living in old age home are more affected in terms of depression as compared to community dwellings elder subjects.⁷ Other studies had also found similar results.^{8,9} However Ranjan S et al, Vishal J et al and Singh AP et al had found somewhat lower rates of depression among residents of old age home (47.33%, 39.04% & 25%).^{10,11,12} The reason for higher prevalence of depression in our study can be due negligible family support, more psychological and social stressors, restricted environment of old age home, financial constraints, lack of medical (physical/mental) care and facilities or a complex mix of these and many unknown factors.³

In the present study 86.7% participants who were above 70 years were depressed whereas 63.6% participants below 70 years were depressed. With the progression of the age, there occurs decline in physical efficiency and the aged person may need assistance from other persons to perform their daily routine activities and such dependency on others may be quite distressing leading to features of depression.¹³ Moreover with increasing age, there is increase in comorbid medical conditions and cognitive decline which are independent risk factors for depression.¹⁴ Our finding is consistent with Vishal J et al who observed higher prevalence of depression among subjects who were above 70 years of age than those who were below 70 years.¹¹ Similarly Maktha S and Kumar MV had also observed that prevalence of depression was significantly associated with increased age.¹ Our finding can further be supported by Nandi et al who found that there is an increase in the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity especially depression with age in geriatric population.¹⁵

Prevalence of depression was found higher in females (87.5%) than in males (62.5%) Generally the females are at greater risk of depressive symptoms.¹⁶ Being widow, remaining away from childrens and institutional care such as old age homes may increase depression among females.¹⁷ Our finding is in agreement with Sethi V et al and

Vishal J et al who observed higher prevalence of depression among females living in old age homes.^{7,11} Similarly Singh AP et al had also found that prevalence of depression was more in women than men residing in old age homes.¹² Maktha S and Kumar MV had also observed that prevalence of depression was significantly associated with female gender.¹ However Kumar P et al had observed that prevalence of depression was almost equal in both males and females.³

In this study 79.3% participants who were uneducated were depressed and only 57.9% educated ones were depressed. Individuals with poor literacy skills had a greater chance of developing depression¹⁸ as for literate persons it is easy to accept this change as compared to illiterate ones.¹⁹ Singh AP et al had found more prevalence of depression among illiterates¹² whereas Vishal J et al had observed more prevalence of depression among literate residents of old age homes.¹¹

In our study prevalence of depression among widowed residents was high (73.9%). The lonelier persons of all times were widowed individuals who had no one to express or share their feelings which causes significant levels of distress among them leading to symptomatology of depressive illness in these individuals.¹³ Our finding is in accordance to Vishal J et al who observed that among patients with depression 74.4% were single.¹¹

Prevalence of depression in this study was high among the elderly who had comorbid physical illness as 83.6% elderly with physical illness were depressed and only 47.1% without physical illness were depressed. Elderly peoples with late onset depression are at increased risk of medical comorbidity and medical comorbidity itself is a risk factor for poor antidepressant tolerability and inferior treatment response leading to depression and hence forming a vicious cycle.¹⁴ Our finding is in agreement with Ranjan S et al who found higher prevalence of depression in elderly having history of physical illness.²⁰ Our finding can further supported by Chong M et al who found higher risk of depressive disorders among those with physical illnesses.²¹ Similarly Malhotra R et al had also observed strong correlation of depressive

symptoms and physical disability.²² Other studies had also found similar results.^{23,24}

Conclusion

From present study, it has been concluded that there was high prevalence of depression among the individuals residing in old age homes. Depression was more in those who were above 70 years old, females, widowed, uneducated and had comorbid physical illnesses. Hence it is recommended that psychiatric health professionals, social health workers, government officials and researchers should start various psychoeducational programmes and health checks on regular basis to assist these vulnerable sections of the society.

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Declaration

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