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Anaemia in elders: A hospital based pilot study

Jenosha I¹, Sujanitha V¹, Kumanan T¹,

¹Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Introduction Anaemia is a common clinical entity often overlooked in elderly population and considered to be a hidden danger for physiological decompensation.

Objectives To study the prevalence, types and associated factors of anaemia in elderly patients admitted to a general medical wards.

Methodology It is a descriptive cross sectional study carried out in medical wards of Teaching hospital-Jaffna over couple of months from July 2019 among patients aged 60 years and above. Data collected from patients and medical records, available blood tests were analysed. No specialised investigations were requested for the study purpose. 126 consecutive elderly patients admitted were recruited for the analysis. Ethical clearance was obtained from ethical review committee, faculty of medicine, Jaffna.

Results Mean age of the study group was 72.58 years and mean haemoglobin (Hb) level was 10.71g% in males and 10.64g% in females. Of the total, 29.1%(n 37) were not anaemic.50.4%(n 63) had Hb in the range of 10-12.17.3%(n 22) had Hb in the range of 7-10 and 3.1%(n 4) had Hb less than 7. Out of the 70.9%(n 89) anaemic patients, the types of anaemia identified based on red cell indices were normocytic normochromic anaemia 44.9%(n 56), microcytic hypochromic anaemia 11%(n14) and macrocytic hypochromic anaemia 15.0%(n 19). Of the total, 7.1%(n 9) were known to have anaemia in the past and the rest not known to have anaemia.10.5%(n 13) of the total received iron treatment within the last 6 months.27.6%(n 35) were on antiplatelet medication in which 11.85%(n 15) were on aspirin alone, 6.3% (n 8)were on clopidogrel alone and 9.4%(n 12) were on dual antiplatelets. Another 5.5%(n 7) have used additional NSAIDs within last 3 months.

Conclusion Though being a single centre hospital based study is a limitation, the findings of the study highlight the burden of anaemia in hospitalised elderly patients. Prospective community based studies are warranted to investigate the cause and pattern of anaemia of Sri Lankan elders.