

Fall risk status and its associated factors among elderly patients attending medical clinics at Teaching Hospital Jaffna

T. Gohulan¹, C. Keerthana¹, J. Sabras¹, P.A.D. Coonghe², V. Sujanitha³

¹*Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

²*Department of Community and Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

³*Department of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

Background and objective: Falls, among the principal causes of morbidity in the elderly population, are predictable and preventable. This study aims to assess fall risk status and its associated factors among elderly patients attending medical clinics at Teaching Hospital Jaffna.

Methods: A hospital-based descriptive cross-sectional study was done among 197 elderly patients attending the medical clinics at Teaching Hospital Jaffna using systematic sampling. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to collect details on socio demographic factors, diseases, medications, cognitive status and fall risk. The Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA, Tamil version) and Fall Risk Assessment Tool (FRAT) were used to assess the cognitive status and the fall risk status, respectively. The results of the MoCA were used in the cognitive assessment part of FRAT. Chi-square test, t-test and Pearson correlation were used to describe the association of different variables.

Results: Of 197 participants, only 24.4% had normal cognitive status while others had mild (55.3%), moderate (19.8%) and severe (0.5%) impairment. Over three-quarters (78.2%) had low fall risk, while 17.3% and 4.5% had medium and high fall risk, respectively. Fall risk was significantly higher in patients above 75 years ($p=0.001$) and in patients taking antihypertensives ($p=0.024$), hypolipidaemics ($p=0.025$) and diuretics ($p=0.009$). There was a statistically significant association between fall risk status and using alcohol and smoking ($p=0.047$), and having asthma/COPD ($p=0.047$). The Pearson correlation was significant at the 0.01 level between the FRAT score and number of comorbidities and number of drugs.

Conclusion: The fall risk status of elderly patients attending medical clinics of Teaching Hospital Jaffna is statistically significantly associated with age, use of antihypertensive, hypolipidaemics, diuretics, alcohol, smoking, having asthma/COPD, the number of comorbidities and number of drugs.

Keywords: Cognitive Status, Elderly, Fall Risk Status, Jaffna