

Prevalence and correlates of depression, cognitive impairment and disability among elderly medical clinic attendees

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Introduction and Objectives: With the ageing population in Sri Lanka growing, it now becomes necessary to arrange specialized care and treatment to meet the needs of the elderly. Owing to the physical and physiological changes, the elderly is more vulnerable to suffer from various illnesses and disabilities. Moreover, they are also vulnerable to get psychological problems. The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence and correlates of depression, cognitive impairment and disability among the elderly patients attending the medical clinics.

Methods: This institution based, descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out in the medical clinics at the Teaching Hospital Jaffna, among medical clinic attendees aged 60 and above. Systematic sampling method was used to collect 122 samples. An interviewer-administered questionnaire including the 15-item Geriatric Depression scale, Montreal Cognitive Assessment, World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule 2.0, and a sociodemographic section were used. The data was analyzed using Student's T-Test and One-way ANOVA.

Results: Depression was prevalent in 44.3% (95% CI– 35.5 - 53.1) of the elderly attending medical clinics, while cognitive impairment was prevalent in 80.3% (95% CI– 73.2 - 87.4), and disability in 95.9% (95% CI – 92.4 - 99.4). The level of depression was significantly associated with gender ($p=0.013$), marital status ($p=0.019$), and living arrangement ($p<0.001$). Educational level showed significant association with cognitive impairment ($p=0.045$) and disability ($p=0.008$). In addition, disability showed significant association with marital status ($p=0.027$).

Conclusion: Among the elderly patients attending the medical clinics, females and those living alone were at more risk of developing depression. Those who did not marry were more likely to develop depression and disability. Those with no formal education or with primary education were more likely to develop cognitive impairment and disability.

Keywords: Ageing, Dementia, Depression in elderly, Functional decline, Gerontology