A Study on Screening for Depression among Inhabitants of Old Age Homes in Anand Taluka and Associated Epidemiological Determinants

Uday Shankar Singh, Tumul Nandan, Hemshree Parmar, Aanal A Bhoiwala, Aartiben V Jambu, Asmitaben J Parmar

1 Professor and Head, 2 Resident doctors, Department of Community Medicine, 3 Third MBBS Students
Pramukhswami Medical College, Karamsad, Gujarat

Correspondence: Dr. Uday Shankar Singh, E-mail: drudayss@gmail.com

Abstract:

**Introduction:** According to the Global Burden of Disease Study 2015, the age group having the highest percentage of persons living with depression is the elderly, especially between the sixty to eighty year age group. Depression in later age is a very common psychiatric morbidity. A validated screening tool is very helpful to recognize depression in early stages. **Objectives:** To screen for depression among sixty to eighty year old people living in old age homes of Anand taluka and study variables that may be associated with it. **Method:** Inhabitants of old age homes between the age group sixty to eighty years in Anand taluka were included in the study. The participants were screened using the Geriatric Depression Scale-short version. For the associated variables, dichotomous responses were taken. The participants who were found depressed by the scale were referred for further counseling. **Results:** Two- third of the participants screened were found as depressed. Depression was more among females, participants with co-morbidities, participants who are living alone and those who were financially dependent. **Conclusion:** According to our study, females especially in the 60-69 year age group were found to be depressed more than the other age group and gender. It is important to look into other factors which may be associated with old age depression which need to be assessed for each elderly separately.

**Key Words:** Depression, Screening, Old age

Introduction:

Depression is the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide. According to the latest estimates from WHO, more than 300 million people are now living with depression, an increase of more than 18% between 2005 and 2015. As estimated by WHO, depression occurs in 7% of the general elderly population.

The WHO has identified strong links between depression and other non-communicable disorders and diseases. Depression is also an important risk factor for suicide, which claims hundreds of thousands of lives each year. It is very important to screen for depression at a very early stage in order to prevent mortalities.

The theme for the 2017 World Health Day was depression. The campaign slogan being — “Depression: let’s talk”. This implies that there is a need for public awareness in this field. Many efforts are being done in order to make the general public aware of mental health.

India is home to an estimated 57 million people (18% of the global estimate) affected by depression. A systematic review reported a prevalence of 21.9% for depression among the elderly in India. Among the community based studies in the elderly, the prevalence of depression ranged from 3.9% to 47.0% with higher rates among female and urban residents.

**Objectives:** To screen for depression among sixty to eighty year olds living in old age homes of Anand taluka and study variables that may be associated with it.

**Method:**

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Institutional ethics Committee, PSMC, Karamsad. The permission to carry out the study was obtained.
from the heads of old age homes. All individuals participated in the study voluntarily. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants.

The inclusion criteria was 60-80 year old inhabitants of old age homes in Anand taluka. The individuals who were already diagnosed and were on treatment for mental health problems, individuals who were non-cooperative or had severe behavioral problems or cognitive impairment; or had a severe hearing impairment; or known terminal illness were also excluded. 3 old age homes from Anand taluka were included in the study. Collectively in all these three old age homes, fitting to the criteria of inclusion and exclusion, a total of 50 participants were finally screened. The purpose of the study was explained and consent was taken from each participant. All the participants were screened using the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS-short version). The GDS-short version consists of a set of 15 questions to be answered in a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ format. Scoring of the scale was done according to the guidelines. A participant with a score of above 5 was considered depressed according to the GDS-short version. The participants who were found out to be depressed by screening were referred for further evaluation and counseling at the tertiary center.

Results:

Out of 50 participants, 33 (66%) were found to have a score above 5 and hence classified as depressed which is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Percentage of participants screened**

As shown in Table 1, 17 out of 22 (77%) participants who were suffering from Diabetes and/or Hypertension were depressed as opposed to 16 out of 28 (57%) who were not suffering from these conditions. 23 out of 32 (72%) participants who were financially dependent were depressed whereas 10 out of 18 (55%) participants who were financially independent were depressed. 20 out of 31 (64%) participants whose spouse was alive were depressed compared to 13 out of 19 (68%) participants whose spouse was not alive. All these above associations were not found to be significant (p>0.05).

Discussion:

This study was conducted to screen sixty to eighty year olds living in old age homes of Anand taluka for depression. A study done in Rajkot, Gujarat by Zalavadia D et al found females to be more depressed as compared to males, a finding similar to our study (although found to be statistically not significant. They also found economic maladies and the presence of chronic ailments as predictors of depression, but both these variables were statistically not significant in current study. [6]

In another study done by Sinha S et al in Tamil Nadu, female sex and widowhood were found to be
Conclusion and Recommendation:

According to this study, females especially in the 60-69 year age group were found to be depressed more than the other age group and gender. Although we studied some independent variables, they were not found to have significant association. Certain problems in this age group may be subjecting, therefore qualitative studies should be carried out to understand the depth of the problem and to ascertain reasons for their depressed state. It is important to look into other factors which may be associated with old age depression which need to be assessed for each elderly separately. Therefore, it is imperative to have a holistic approach to health for the elderly. Associated socio-economic variables need to be addressed in order for them to have a better quality of life.

Acknowledgement:

The authors would like to acknowledge Dr. Deepak Sharma, Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Pramukhswami Medical College, Karamsad for his invaluable inputs and assistance.
Declaration:

Funding: Nil

Conflict of Interest: Nil

References:


