

Food Security among the elderly: status, determinants and consequences

ABSTRACT

Health and wellbeing during old age is essential as in this population there is rapid increase in their number and is estimated to be 93 million which accounts to 8.3% of the total population. This age group experiences an array of problems like lack of income, health deterioration and loneliness. Despite this, the government is making efforts and yet the elderly continues to face issues relating to social, economic and health related securities. A number of chronic conditions faced by the elderly are due to faulty dietary patterns and lifestyle, having an adverse effect on the mortality rate. Their changed role in society makes the elderly vulnerable and deplorable. Unavailability or access of food hinders their course of ageing.

Access to sufficient amount of safe and nutritious food is a fundamental human right. Food security is defined as a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. A dietary need here is referred to meeting the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA). Globally about 794.6 million (10.9%) population are facing the problem of food insecurity. In developing countries the number is estimated to be 779.9 million (12.9%) and in India it is about 300 million (5.5%) population is suffering from food insecurity.

Food insecurity has adverse effects among the elderly, leading to adverse health conditions including diabetes mellitus, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and other chronic ailments. There has been evidence regarding the assessment of nutrition status among the elderly. There is limited systematic research done on food availability, accessibility, utilization and sustainability. Thus the proposed study aims at accessing the food security status among the elderly, explore barriers for the same. The research also aims at understanding the consequences on the health of the elderly. The study would be conducted in Ramtedki, a notified slum in Pune city. A quantitative method would be adopted for the same for which purposive sampling would be used. A survey method would be used for accessing food security among the elderly.

Key words: Food security, elderly, health, nutrition