

11TH EUROPEAN NUTRITION AND DIETETICS CONFERENCE

June 29-July 01, 2017 Madrid, Spain

Factors affecting nutritional status among elderly people of rural Nepal: A community based cross-sectional study

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Statement of the Problem: Every country in the world is facing a demographic challenge due to drastic growth of population over 60 years. Adequate diet and nutritional status are important determinants of health in elderly populations. This study aimed to assess the nutritional status among the elderly population and factors associated with malnutrition at the community setting in rural Nepal.

Methodology: This is a community based cross-sectional study among elderly of age 60 years or above in the three randomly selected VDCs of Morang district in eastern Nepal, between August and November, 2016. A multi stage cluster sampling was adopted with sample size of 345 of which 339 participated in the study. Nutritional status was assessed by MNA tool and associated socio-economic, demographic, psychological and nutritional factors were checked by binary logistic regression analysis.

Findings: Among 339 participants, 24.8% were found to be within normal nutritional status, 49.6% were at risk of malnutrition and 24.8% were malnourished. Independent factors associated with malnutrition status among the elderly people after controlling the cofounders in the bivariate analysis were: elderly who were malnourished were those who belonged to backward caste according to traditional Hindu caste system [OR=2.69, 95% CI: 1.17-6.21), being unemployed (OR=3.23, 95% CI: 1.63-6.41), who experienced any mistreatment from caregivers (OR=4.05, 95% CI: 1.90-8.60), being not involved in physical activity (OR=4.67, 95% CI: 1.87-11.66) and those taking medication for any co-morbidities.

Conclusion & Significance: Many socio-economic, psychological and physiological factors affect nutritional status in our sample population and these issues need to be addressed for bringing improvement in elderly nutrition and health status.

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