

Ageing Morbidity in Kerala

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Old age is considered to be the last chapter of life. Though, a universal phenomenon, it is not a uniform experience among senior citizens. Some persons achieve a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in their old-age while others turn bitter and lament the decline of their physical abilities and social significance. The specific health problems among the elderly are totally different from adult or young. Though there has been a shift in disease pattern from communicable to non-communicable diseases, they usually suffer multiple chronic diseases. That is, old age is generally accompanied by a number of problems that the aged have to face and adjust within varying degrees. These problems may range from ensured and sufficient income to support themselves and their dependents to sound health, creative use of free time, social security, love and recognition, social participation, dignity, and self-respect. Loss of economic independence and physical vigour and emergence of various types of generative diseases change an aged from an independent self supporting individual to one who needs help from their children, members of the family and society in general. Hence the objectives of this paper are

- (1) to examine the health status of a sample of old Population,
- (2) to study the risk of disability and its determinants.

The data were collected from 1745 households from the three wards of Trivandrum districts. In addition to the univariate and bivariate analysis Survival analysis has been utilized to understand the risk of having functional disability among the oldest old. It is clearly evident from the study that more than 67 percent of the elderly persons are suffering from one or more chronic diseases. It was also found that nearly 11 percent of the sample population requires some help or assistance for their daily routine. The prevalence of blood pressure and diabetes is higher among the elderly population and more than 60 percent reported their health status as poor or very poor. The chronic morbidity and health status are significantly, varied across their socio-economic characteristics.

Even when one is not suffering from any diseases, one experiences a gradual decline in physical strength with growing age. Healthy ageing requires life style that will avoid habits causing health hazards and shortening life span. Old age is usually considered as a period of illness and need for prolonged expense and expertise treatment. So their health care becomes a serious problem to their family. The feeling of the elderly that they should be taken care of by family is important for better quality of life. Hence healthy ageing and health promoting behaviours are absolutely essential.
