

ABSTRACT

Nutritional status of the elderly resident at the Golden Age Home, Kingston.

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The elderly group has been acclaimed as the as the fastest growing worldwide, with the most increase taking place in the developing countries. Due to this increase in the elderly population and importance of good nutrition which is the possibility of a more vigorous and abundant life, there is need for more research on this group of individuals especially as it relates to their nutrition.

This study is aimed at assessing the nutritional status of the elderly residents at the Golden Age Home, Kingston, a government institution; and the relationship between nutritional status and state of health. This study involved 96 elderly resident at the institution aged 60 years and above. It was conducted in two phases; the first phase involved administration of a questionnaire to assess their demographic characteristics, dietary habits, functional status and state of health as reported by the individuals. The second phase involved taking anthropometric measurements and blood samples from each of the respondents to assess their nutritional status.

Findings revealed that the majority (55.2%) of the respondents were males compared to 44.8% females, with mean age 77.2 ± 8.9 years. The gender difference was statistically significant ($t=3.19$, $p<0.01$). Majority, (80.2%) was functionally independent and ambulant. Chronic illnesses prevalent among this group were hypertension, arthritis and diabetes. Nutritional status revealed malnutrition at different levels (36.5%) and high incidence of anaemia ((52.1%), but this was higher in males than females (20 males compared to 15 females malnourished and 54.7% males compared with 48.8% females with anaemia).

Overweight/obesity was more prevalent among the females (32.6%) compared to males (11.3%). Underweight/ different levels of malnutrition were however more prevalent among the males. Most of these elderly were involved in one form of physical activity or the other, with more males than females engaging in physical activities. Different sources of support were revealed but this needs to be improved. There was no significant relationship between nutritional status and state of health.

Recommendations were made for improving the quality of the diets of the elderly residents at institutions to improve their nutritional status and addressing factors that affect nutrition. There is also a need for further/continuing research on the nutritional needs of this group of individuals, especially those residents in institutions, and better policies for this group.