

The nutritional status of the elderly residents in a public Home was assessed by means of anthropometric measurements, clinical signs and qualitative food analysis.

The general features of life in the Home were recorded, and an attempt was made to elucidate the major influences on nutritional status in this institution. Two hundred and thirty residents participated in the study.

Analysis revealed that Protein Energy Malnutrition (PEM) exists in at least 24% of the men, and 18% of the women as determined by anthropometric measurements. Muscle circumferences were adequate, but mean triceps skinfold measurements were less than 60% of standard in both men and women.

Energy intakes were 75% of the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) in men, and 90% of the RDA in women. Thiamine and vitamin C intakes may have been low due to cooking losses, but vitamin A, iron, riboflavin and protein intakes were adequate.

Clinical signs confirmed the finding of PEM, and suggested that anemia exists.

Age, the length of stay and poor eyesight had minor influences on nutritional status in the women, but had no apparent effect on nutritional status in the men. Alcohol consumption influenced nutritional status to a minor degree in men.

Mobility, impaired hearing, mental disability, masticatory inefficiency, visitors and impaired appetite had no appreciable effect on nutritional status in either men or women.