Preventive Medicine 2018
EuroSciCon
9th Edition of International Conference on
Preventive Medicine & Public Health
July 16 -17, 2018 London, UK



Almost one-third elderly persons affected with anaemia – a cross-sectional community-based study from rural India

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INTRODUCTION:
A rise in elderly population is noted in India not just in absolute numbers buts also in proportion. Anaemia in elderly is associated with increased morbidity and mortality and aggravating the comorbidities. Lack of quality information in community-based elderly exists, hence, our study aimed to estimate the prevalence of anaemia among community-dwelling elderly persons and qualify the same morphologically.

METHODOLOGY:
Rural community-based, cross-sectional study among elderly persons ≥ 60 years was conducted in December 2016 and May 2017 in Haryana, India. A sample size of 396 was calculated and participants were selected randomly from the Health and Demographic Surveillance System. The pre-tested self-developed semi-structured questionnaire was administered and a capillary blood specimen was used to estimate Hemoglobin using HemoCue method. WHO cutoff's for anaemia was used and morphology of anaemia was ascertained by examination of peripheral blood smears.

RESULTS:
Prevalence of anaemia among community-dwelling elderly persons was 28.3(95% C.I. 24- 32.9). Anaemia was more prevalent in elderly males (28.6, 95% C.I. 22.8- 35.1) than in elderly females (27.9, 95% C.I. 22.1- 34.6). Prevalence increased with each passing decade (24.4, 31.1,37.2). Normocytic anaemia was most commonly found the type of anaemia morphologically (49.5%).

CONCLUSIONS:
Prevalence of anaemia among community-dwelling elderly is high and is of public health concern. Routine screening for anaemia as part of geriatric health care services should be incorporated.

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Category: Oral presentation
Session name: Preventive Medicine and Geriatrics
Research interest: Anaemia, Geriatrics,