



PERCEPTION ON FALLS AMONG COMMUNITY DWELLING ELDERS: A STUDY FROM SOUTHERN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Falls and induced injuries among elders has become a major public health concern in all regions of the world. Identification of individuals' perception on falls may create better preventive strategies. Perception on falls and falls prevention programmes among elderly were evaluated in this cross sectional study. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was applied among 300 community dwelling elders aged 65 years and above in Nagoda Divisional Secretariat area, Galle. Mean (SD) age of the participants was 73.0 (6.7) years. Falls as a common consequence was perceived by 54.3% and 54.7% did not consider themselves to be susceptible to falling. 76.2% considered home as the most conducive place to prevent falls. Necessity of physical activity strengthening programmes was perceived by 52.7% and 90.7% recognized the importance of falls prevention programmes. 99.7% (299) of the participants perceived the importance of treating underlying medical conditions to prevent falls. There were statistically significant associations of the statement "I consider falls as a common consequence associated with elderly" with age ($p=0.00$) and educational level ($p=0.00$). 58.3% of the participants with that perception were aged 65- 74 years. Gender ($p=0.02$) and educational level ($p=0.00$) showed significant association with the statement on perception regarding personal susceptibility for falls. Among them 52.4% were females and 54.3% educated above grade 5. The statement "I do not worry about falling down and getting injured" showed significant association with educational level ($p=0.00$). The perception regarding the home safety for falls prevention showed significant association with age ($p=0.02$) and educational level ($p=0.00$). Perception regarding importance of physical activities showed significant association with gender ($p=0.03$) and educational level ($p=0.00$). Perception regarding importance of awareness programmes on falls induced injuries showed significant association with age ($p=0.04$) and educational level ($P=0.00$). Community dwelling elders had positive perception towards the importance of falls prevention awareness programmes. Gender and educational status were associated with the perception on most of the areas. Importance of falls related awareness programmes to enhance the understanding of personal susceptibility to falls need to be emphasized.

Keywords: Falls, Perception, Elders, Susceptibility