

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Visual impairment is a worldwide health problem. It affects mainly low and middle income countries with rapid increase in aging population. Main causes of visual impairment in Asian countries are cataract and refractive errors. Up to 80% of visual impairment can be prevented and treated cost effectively.

Objective

The study was conducted to determine the prevalence of different types of visual impairment among adults aged forty years and above in the MOH area Mahara and describe selected factors associated with cataract.

Methodology

This was a community based descriptive cross sectional study, conducted in the MOH area Mahara, during the period between August and October 2009. Study population consisted of 602 adults aged forty years and above selected from applying cluster sampling technique. Study instruments were interviewer administered questioner and a record sheet.

Data analysis was done using SPSS 16th version. Prevalence of visual impairments and its 95% confidence intervals (CI) were calculated. Multivariate logistic regression was applied for assessment of factors associated with cataract. Results were expressed as odds ratios and its 95% CIs.

Results

Overall prevalence of visual impairment was 21.3% (95% CI: 18.03-24.57). Prevalence of low vision and blindness were 19.6% (95% CI: 16.43-21.77) and 1.7% (95% CI: 0.67-2.73) respectively. Prevalence of visual impairment with best correction was 11% (95% CI: 8.55-13.45). Prevalence of low vision and blindness

with best correction was 8.3% (95% CI: 7.12-11.48) and 1.7% (95% CI: 0.67-2.73). Overall prevalence of refractive error and prevalence of cataract were 11.1% (95% CI: 8.59-13.61) and 14.6% (95% CI: 11.78-17.42) respectively.

After controlling confounding factors, age more than 60 years (OR 10.31; 95% CI: 5.90-18.03), monthly per capita income less than 2500 rupees (OR 2.66; 95% CI: 1.52-4.66) and duration of alcohol consumption more than 20 years (OR 2.18; 95% CI: 1.06-4.50) were found to be associated with cataract.

Conclusion

Visual impairment was a health problem among adults aged 40 years and above in the MOH area Mahara. Being an elderly, low income and longer duration of alcohol consumption were associated with cataract.

Recommendations

Health care facilities should be improved to screen and treat visual impairment.

Key words

Visual impairment, Refractive errors and cataract