



ABSTRACT

The changes in the age structure of population in the past few decades had resulted in an increase in the elderly population not only in the developed countries but also in the developing countries where there are no policies or programs to face the problems of the elderly. The assessment of the physical health, mental health, personal care capacity and utilisation of health care facilities by the elderly forms a basis for the formulation of policies and programs meant for the elderly.

A community based descriptive study was undertaken in the MOH area of Ragama to obtain demographic and socioeconomic data, morbidity, personal care capacity and factors which make the elders happy or unhappy and the utilisation of the health services, by using several approaches; self assessment of health status, self reported health problems, functional health measures, anthropometric measurements and physical examination of the elders.

The findings show the common health problems to be, visual, hearing, mastication and nutritional problems. Conditions like arthritis, hypertension and diabetes which require long term care, were fairly common and the majority frequently sought treatment from the government hospitals.

Majority of the elders were living happily because of their moderate income status, absence of family problems and the progress in their children. Therefore family plays the major roll in the caring for the elders and making their life happy.

Therefore it is suggested to have programs aimed at:

1. supporting the traditional family care system for the elders.
2. preventive aspects of chronic disease and limitation of disabilities to increase the disability free life expectancy.