

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Malnutrition among elderly is a worldwide public health problem. However, information on knowledge and dietary pattern of elderly in Sri Lanka is limited.

Objectives

To describe the knowledge on diet, dietary pattern and the associated factors and to determine the association between the knowledge on diet and the dietary pattern among the elderly in Medical Officer of Health area (MOH), Bulathkohupitiya

Methods

A community based cross sectional study was conducted in Bulathkohupitiya MOH area. Sample size was 512. Sixty years and above elders were recruited by cluster sampling technique. All Grama-Niladhari areas were chosen as clusters and the first participant was selected randomly. Thereafter, participants from consecutive households were included. Public Health Midwives collected data using an interviewer administered questionnaire and a 24-hour dietary recall. Descriptive analysis was done for socio demographic and other associated factors and associations were calculated using chi square test and Odds ratio.

Results

Response rate was 98% (N=502). The age distribution ranged from 60 to 93 years and mean age was 67.2 years. Dietary knowledge was generally adequate with 62% (n=312) scoring 50% or more marks. Knowledge was positively associated with young age (OR=1.6; 95% CI=1.09-2.36; $p=0.017$) being a Sinhalese (OR=3.04; 95% CI=1.41-6.54; $p=0.003$) and being a rural resident (OR=15.23; 95% CI=3.48-66.70; $p<0.001$). Knowledge level was negatively associated with low educational level (OR=0.15; 95% CI=0.10-0.22; $p<0.001$) and non-participation in social-activities (OR=0.24; 95% CI=0.14-0.42; $p<0.001$). Television (OR=2.78; 95% CI=1.88-4.12; $p<0.001$) and newspapers/books (OR=4.29; 95% CI=2.73-6.72; $p<0.001$) showed a statistically significant association as sources of knowledge on diet. Health sector contribution for knowledge was inadequate (12.2%, n= 61).

Dietary pattern among elderly was cereal/tubers based (100%, n=493), with a significantly poor proportion meeting dietary recommendations in vegetable (5%; n=25); dairy (11%; n=53) and fruit (12%; n=57) consumption. Availability of food and income of elderly were associated with consumption of better quality foods ($p<0.05$). Food variety score ($r=0.308$), dietary diversity score ($r=0.206$) and dietary serving score ($r=0.237$) positively correlated ($p=0.01$) with dietary knowledge.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Dietary quality and quantity of elderly have to be improved. Health sector should contribute more to increase dietary knowledge. Availability of foods and the income for elderly have to be enhanced.

Key words

Elderly, dietary pattern, dietary knowledge