

ABSTRACT

Background: Medication adherence among elderly patients is a major determinant of treatment outcomes, particularly in those with multiple chronic conditions. Poor adherence is associated with increased morbidity, hospitalizations and healthcare costs.

Objective: To assess the medication adherence and its associated factors among elderly patients attending the Geriatric and Medical clinics at Colombo South Teaching Hospital, Sri Lanka.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among elderly patients attending geriatric and medical clinics at CSTH, in November 2025. Data were collected using a pre-tested interviewer administered questionnaire. Medication Adherence was measured by the adapted 8-item Morisky Medication Adherence Scale (MMAS-8). Qualitative data was collected using Focus Group Discussions.

Results: Overall response rate was good (94.3%; n=402). The majority of the study sample was female (57.2%), married (54%), living with the family (60.4%) and aged between 70-<80 years (45%) with 25.4% of them currently employed. The majority of them demonstrated low medication adherence (55.2%), followed by moderate (37.8%), and high adherence (7.0%).

Significant associations were observed between medication adherence and socio-demographic factors such as education, income, and living arrangements. Patient-related factors such as memory issues, sensory impairments, and attitudes

significantly associated with adherence. A high prevalence of polypharmacy (77.1%) was observed.

Conclusion & Recommendations: Medication adherence among elderly patients remains suboptimal and is influenced by multiple interacting factors. Targeted interventions and approaches focusing on patient education, counseling, family support, and healthcare system improvements are recommended to enhance medication adherence and improve health outcomes.

Keywords: Medication adherence, elderly, polypharmacy, comorbidities, Sri Lanka