

Poster Abstract 56

Sociodemographic risk factors of dementia among elderly bumiputeras in Sarawak

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Introduction: The population in Malaysia is ageing similar to other parts of the world. Thus, the prevalence of dementia will gradually increase. Bumiputera population consists of 74.8% of the total population in Sarawak, the largest state in the whole of Malaysia. However, data regarding mental health among this group of population is limited.

Objective: This study was done to determine the prevalence of dementia and its associated risk factors among the elderly Bumiputera patients in primary care clinics in Sarawak.

Methods: A cross sectional study was done on a group of elderly Bumiputera patients aged 60 years and above attending primary care clinics in Kuching, Sibul and Miri, using a systematic random sampling. Patients with depression were excluded using the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS). Eligible patients were then assessed with the Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE) to detect for dementia using the cut-off score of 21.

Results: The prevalence of dementia among 521 elderly Bumiputera patients was 24.2% (CI 3.587, 10.090; P<0.001). After controlling for confounding factors, dementia was independently associated with female gender (adjusted OR: 2.390; 95% CI: 1.300, 4.392; P=0.005), no formal education (adjusted OR: 12.227; 95% CI: 6.532, 22.888; P<0.001) and low household income (below median of RM500) (adjusted OR: 4.658; 95% CI: 2.383, 9.107; P<0.001).

Conclusions: The prevalence of dementia among elderly Bumiputera in Sarawak was 24.2%. About 1 in 4 of this population may develop dementia. Thus, dementia awareness and education are an important part of the public health education.

