

Nutritional challenges among the elderly in an old folks home in Pahang

Abstract

Older adults are the fastest growing segment of the population worldwide. It is estimated that in 2025, there will be a total of about 1.2 billion people over the age of 60. The aim of this study is to determine the food habits among the elderly in the old folk's home, and assess their intake of macronutrients and micronutrients. This study was conducted in four old folk's home in Pahang, namely Alur Akar CARE Centre, Pusat Jagaan Orang Tua Indah, Grannies Old Folks Home, and Melodi Nursing Home. Respondents were divided into five groups; 51-60 years, 61-70 years, 71-80 years, 81-90 years and 91 above. Respondents were asked the types of food consumed per day. Frequency and amount of vitamin supplements intake was substantial. The mean energy intake was less than the Malaysian RNI (men= 2020 kcal, women= 1600 kcal) for all the five age groups. The carbohydrate intake was higher than fat and protein intake. The mean calcium intake (men=105.4 mg, woman= 136.5 mg), was found to be extremely low which could lead to problems like osteoporosis. For vitamin and mineral intake, all the age groups consumed less than Malaysian RNI for both sexes. The total mean of all nutrient intake were found to decline with age increment for both sexes. About 76% of the elderly had a normal weight, 18% were underweight, followed by 2% of them obese and 4% overweight. About 61% of the subjects consumed between 3-4 glasses plain water per day, followed by 13% consuming 1 – 2 glasses per day, 25% consumed 5-6 glasses and only 1% of them consumed between 7-8 glasses of plain water per day. This study shows that the nutrient intakes were lower than RNI for both sexes. Older people have a decreased thirst and more likely to become dehydrated. Primary care providers need to be vigilant when treating elderly patients under their care in the old folk's home.