

PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AND RELATED RISK FACTORS AMONG THE ELDERLY LIVING IN A RURAL KOREAN COMMUNITY

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Background: In Korea, the suicide mortality rate among the elderly has been higher than that in other groups. Especially, the suicide rate of elderly persons living in the rural regions was reported higher than that in the urban regions. Depression symptom might be a major risk factor for suicide of the elderly population. Two-thirds of Korean elderly who attempted suicide reported depression symptoms. Thus, concern for depression needs to be given priority for suicide prevention among elderly persons. This study aimed to clarify the prevalence of depressive symptoms and identify a range of risk factors for depression among elderly persons in a rural Korean community. Methods: The Questionnaire survey was conducted on 158 residents over age 60 in a rural region of Kyung-gi province in Korea. Depressive symptoms were assessed with Short-form Geriatric Depression Scale. Results: The prevalence of depressive symptoms (SGDS score 10 points or more) was 13.1%. Regression analysis showed that subjective physical health status, number of diseases, subjective economic status, and perceived social support were significantly associated with depression symptoms. The strongest association with depressive symptoms was found for poor physical health status of participants. Conclusions: The findings suggested that community-based screening of the elderly for depression symptoms and measures to improve the accessibility to medical services might be effective for the prevention of depression and suicide among the elderly living in the rural areas.