Disability in Singapore’s Elderly Population

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Abstract

Introduction: Disability increases an individual’s dependence and negatively impacts their physical, mental, and social functioning. The current study aims to establish the prevalence and risk factors of disability in Singapore’s population. Materials and Methods: Data was extracted from the Well-being of the Singapore Elderly (WiSE) study. This cross-sectional study recruited participants aged 60 years and above (n = 2421) who were representative of Singapore’s multiethnic population. We used the World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS) 2.0 to assess the severity of disability in our sample while establishing its associations and correlations with cognitive levels, sociodemographic variables, and chronic illness. Results: Cognitive deficits, old age, female gender, Malay and Indian ethnicity, lack of education, retired or homemaker status, presence of chronic illness (specifically stroke, heart problems, depression, and dementia) were found to be significantly associated with disability in Singapore’s elderly population. As hypothesised, participants with deficits in cognition were more likely to indicate higher WHODAS scores. Conclusion: The findings highlighted specific factors associated with disability in this multiethnic population. The identification of these factors would lead the way to the development of appropriate interventions.

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