

A CASE SERIES OF DEPRESSED ELDERLY (>64 YEARS) PRESENTING IN A GENERAL HOSPITAL IN SINGAPORE

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Introduction: A recent national survey highlighted the considerable treatment gap for depression (59.6%) in modern Singapore. Asians tend to focus on physical features of a disease than the psychological ones, which might contribute to the relative lack of disease pick up by physicians. Literature suggests a distinct clinical entity of depression among the elderly, with a different clinical presentation from adults.

Objectives: This retrospective case series was undertaken to understand the clinical features and management decisions of elderly patients presenting with depression in Singapore.

Aims: To describe the demographics, clinical presentation, psychiatric and medical co-morbidities, and management decisions of depression in the elderly.

Methods: Inter-departmental referrals to the Department of Psychological Medicine of Tan Tock Seng Hospital from 1/1/2011 to 31/3/2011 for the management of patients ages above 64 with the diagnosis of depression were collated for case description.

Results: A total of 40 inpatients ages 65 to 104 years (mean 76.2 years) were recruited. 14 (35%) were male and 26 (65%) were female. 70% of them does not have a co-existing psychiatric diagnosis. The highest number of referrals were from the department of General Medicine (42.5%) followed by Geriatric Medicine (25%). Most of the elderly were admitted for infection (20%), followed by equal proportions of those admitted for cardiovascular problems (12.5%), recurrent falls (12.5%), psychiatric issues (12.5%), and orthopedic problems (12.5%).

Conclusions: As the population of Singapore ages, clinicians should be mindful that depression often co-exist with medical co-morbidities, and the complex interaction amongst the two entities.