

## **Ageing and Health Seeking Behaviour: A Medical Sociological Approach to Nintavur Divisional Secretariat, Sri Lanka**

**Rameez, A<sup>\*</sup>, Riswan, M & Lumna, N**

### **Abstract**

Population ageing has become one of the leading demographic issues in most developing countries, particularly in the Asian region. However, difficulties arise in defining the age for elderly. In the context of the western world, age 65 and above is generally considered the demarcation age. In Sri Lanka, age 60 and above is considered to identify elderly population. Health is recognized as an ultimate social goal and a basic human right of every person irrespective of age or sex. The National Health Policy of Sri Lanka also makes reference to the elderly as a group that needs special care. Health seeking behaviour should be distinguished from the broader concept of health behaviour. As any activity undertaken by individuals who perceive themselves to have a health problem or to be ill for the purpose of finding an appropriate remedy. The health seeking behaviour and health care service utilization among the elderly has been high. Thus, this study aimed to explore health seeking behaviour of elderly in Nintavur Divisional Secretariat, Sri Lanka. It focused on the most common health related problems of elderly: revealed where the elderly goes to seek medical care when sick, and those financially responsible for his/her medical needs. Qualitative and Quantitative method have been used to collect the data for this research. Data have been gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Fifty (50) elderly persons (aged 65 years and above) were selected by simple random sampling method to conduct the survey of questionnaire. As secondary data, research articles, magazines, electronic sources and literatures have been used. The findings show that, the majority of the elderly persons had age associated physical illnesses such as blood pressure, cardiac problems, diabetes, joint pains, kidney infections, cancer and tuberculosis that take a long time to heal. Even some had mental illness such as dementia, delirium, anxiety, sleep disorder and depression. More elderly males than female counterparts were found to have patronized traditional healers, resorted to self medication using local herbs or visit chemists' shops whenever they were sick. This research suggested that, the government should put in place programmes that would ensure good health behaviour and elderly people should be provided free, accessible and comprehensive health care in hospitals and other health care centres.

**Key words:** Ageing, Health Seeking Behaviour, Health Care, Traditional Healers

---

To whom correspondence should be addressed: aramees2001@gmail.com

<sup>\*</sup>Senior Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka.