

Elderly friendly initiative in making home-A safer place

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ABSTRACT

Demographic ageing is a global phenomenon. Due to increasing medical facilities, environment and personal consciousness about health, the percentage of elderly have been increased. Falls present a major problem in older adults. Present study aimed to throw light on making home a safer place to live in by thoughtful design to increase safety at home - an initiative towards safe living for elderly. The major objectives were to study the reasons for accidents among the elderly in the home and to assess the nature and frequency of occurrences of accidents. Pre-tested, structured interviewed schedule with observation sheet was developed to collect the relevant information from 100 elderly men and women who were above 60 years of age. Snowball sampling method was used to collect the data. Data revealed that vision problems, joint problems, diabetes and blood pressure were the common prevalent health related problems among selected respondents. An occurrence of the accidents in last two years was found among 60 per cent of the respondents which was due to the housing situation. Among women, 18 per cent had accidents in kitchen and bathroom whereas majority of the men had accidents with electric shock, slipping due to wet floor or falling from the stairs. To reduce the occurrence of the accidents, sense of safety among elderly people can be improved and appropriate design aspects in the home will prove to be beneficial to avoid accidents.

KEY WORDS : Indoor residential hazards, Hazards assessment, Occurrence of accidents, Sense of safety

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INTRODUCTION

Ageing is an irreversible process. In the words of Seneca, "old age is an incurable disease". More recently Ross commented, "You do not heal old age, you protect it, you promote it and you extend it". Expectation of life at birth has increased in recent years. According to the official projections of the Registrar General, India, in 2001 the elderly population is estimated as 71 million and 114 million by the year 2016 (the year for which the ultimate projections were made). The United Nations projections put the estimated number of elderly in India for the year 2025 is 168 million and for 2050 it is 326 million. These are frightening numbers: an elderly population of 20 million in 1951 increasing to 326 million in 2050.

According to United Nations estimates, during the period 1995-2000 in India, the life expectancy of male stood at 62.3 years while that of females was 62.9 years. For the period 2020-2025, the figures will be 68.8 years

for males and 72.1 years for females. Although the number of deaths caused by accidents has fallen by 37 per cent across all age groups in relent over the past twenty years and falls continue to be relatively common causes of death and injury among older people often resulting in serious long term difficulties and even premature death. Consequently the reduction of accidents in the older population is considered to be an important factor in promoting the general well being of older people. The 1998 Health Promotion Strategy for older people was — 'adding years to life not life to years' which was formulated by National Council on aging and Older People in Co-operation with Department of Health and Children set a target to reduce the death rate from all accidents and their adverse effects in people aged 65 and over by at least 17 per cent in the year 2005 (Park, 2000).

While there are marked differences between individuals, age related disabilities like impaired vision,

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