

Chapter 25

A Comprehensive Clinico– Epidemiological Study on Pruritic Dermatoses in the Elderly

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ABSTRACT

This observational study, conducted at Krishna Hospital in Karad, aimed to comprehensively explore pruritic disorders' clinical and epidemiological aspects in individuals aged 60 years and above. The primary focus was on understanding the effects of pruritus on quality of life and investigating the prevalence, distribution, and predictors of pruritic conditions in the elderly population. Executed between February 2021 and July 2022, the study included 200 participants meeting specific inclusion criteria, with ethical standards upheld through written consent. Exclusion criteria were applied to refine the study population. The research adopted a hospital-based clinical-epidemiological observational cross-sectional design within the dermatology department, providing a realistic healthcare setting. Participants underwent comprehensive systemic and cutaneous examinations, completing a locally designed questionnaire.

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INTRODUCTION

Pruritus, also known as itching, is a sensory sensation ranging from moderate and transient to severe and chronic, causing an impulse to scratch the skin. Acute vs chronic pruritus must be distinguished for effective medication. According to Valdes-Rodriguez et al. (2015), acute instances are often linked to transient factors such as bug bites, allergies, or irritant exposure. A comprehensive assessment is required when an elderly person has persistent pruritus that lasts for six weeks or more to identify the specific factor or factors contributing to the itching (Yalçın et al., 2005).

The prevalence of pruritus increases with age, which negatively impacts older people's quality of life and interferes with daily activities, sleep patterns, and job productivity. Understanding the complex pathogenesis in the elderly population means considering dermatological factors like psoriasis, xerosis, or eczema; systemic factors like liver or kidney diseases; neurological factors like neuropathies; and psychogenic factors like stress and anxiety (Valdes-Rodriguez et al., 2015). A thorough assessment is required to determine the underlying cause and guide the appropriate steps (Grundmann & Ständer, 2011).

The biological aging process, which involves molecular damage, alters the skin's structure and function. The skin is more prone to dermatological problems due to external factors like sun exposure and intrinsic factors like decreased collagen and elastin synthesis. Pruritus significantly affects a person's social and psychological well-being and bodily suffering (Erturk et al., 2012). The psychological effects of persistent itching, such as annoyance, anxiety, and social disengagement, underscore the need to attend to these aspects in medical care.

Once the underlying reason has been determined, customized management measures are implemented, and acute instances are frequently resolved by taking care of the trigger. In order to effectively treat persistent pruritus, a comprehensive and rigorous approach is required, one that considers the larger implications on the patient's overall health and the underlying cause. Teaching patients about pruritus and its causes is essential to its effective treatment. Lifestyle changes, such as using good skincare practices and avoiding irritants, greatly reduce symptoms. Patients must understand the need to rapidly seek medical treatment for persistent or severe pruritus to ensure proper and early action (Gurel et al., 2004).

The research highlights the need for sophisticated approaches to treatment that are customized to the complex characteristics of pruritus in the elderly. Understanding and addressing the underlying causes are crucial for enhancing both the physical and psychosocial well-being of the geriatric population affected by pruritic disorders.

Materials and Methodology

The cross-sectional observational study conducted at Krishna Hospital in Karad aimed to explore pruritic disorders' clinical and epidemiological dimensions in individuals aged 60 years and above. Executed from February 2021 to July 2022, the research involved 200 participants who met specific inclusion criteria, ensuring a substantial and statistically meaningful representation of the intended population. In line with ethical standards, participants were required to furnish written consent, affirming their willingness and ability to adhere to study protocols. Exclusion criteria were established to refine the study population by excluding individuals exhibiting elevated apprehension levels or cognitive/neurological dysfunction, contributing to a more uniform and manageable cohort for analysis.

The study within the dermatology department adopted a hospital-based clinic-epidemiological observational cross-sectional design, facilitating a thorough examination of pruritic disorders within a realistic

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