

## Age-Related Health Problems and Needs of Elderly People Living in Rural Areas in Poland

**Authors :** Anna Mirczak

**Abstract :** Introduction: In connection with the aging of the population and the increase in the number of people with chronic illnesses, the priority objective for public health has become not only lengthening life, but also improving quality of life in older persons, as well as maintenance of their relative independence and active participation in social life. The most important determinant of a person's quality of life is health. According to the literature, older people with chronic illness who live in rural settings are at greater risk for poor outcomes than their urban counterparts. Furthermore research characterizes the rural elderly as having a higher incidence of sickness, dysfunction, disability, restricted mobility, and acute and chronic conditions than their urban citizens. It is dictated by the overlapping certain specific socio-economic factors typical for rural areas which include: social and geography exclusion, limited access to health care centers, and low socioeconomic status. Aim of the study: The objective of this study was to recognize health status and needs of older people living in selected rural areas in Poland and evaluate the impacts of working in the farm on their health status. Material and methods: The study was performed personally, using interviews based on the structural questionnaires, during the period from March 2011 to October 2012. The group of respondents consisted 203 people aged 65 years and over living in selected rural areas in Poland. The analysis of collected research material was performed using the statistical package SPSS 19 for Windows. The level of significance for the tested the hypotheses assumed value of 0.05. Results: The mean age of participants was 75,5 years (SD=5,7) range from 65 to 94 years. Most of the interviewees had children (89.2%) and grandchildren (83.7) and lived mainly with family members (75.9%) mostly in double (46.8%) and triple (20.8%) household. The majority of respondents (71,9%) were physical working on the farm. At the time of interview, each of the respondents reported that they had been diagnosed with at least one chronic diseases by their GP. The most common were: hypertension (67,5%), osteoarthritis (44,8%), atherosclerosis (43,3%), cataract (40,4%), arrhythmia (28,6%), diabetes mellitus (19,7%) and stomach or duodenum ulcer diseases (17,2%).The number of diseases occurring of the sample was dependent on gender and age. Significant associations were observed between working on the farm and frequency of occurrence cardiovascular diseases, the gastrointestinal tract dysfunction and sensory disorders. Conclusions: The most common causes of disability among older citizens were: chronic diseases, malnutrition and complaints about access to health services (especially to cardiologist and an ophthalmologist). Health care access and health status are a particular concern in rural areas where the population is older, has lower education and income levels, and is more likely to be living in medically underserved areas than is the case in urban areas.

**Keywords :** ageing, health status, older people, rural

**Conference Title :** ICDD 2016 : International Conference on Disability and Diversity

**Conference Location :** London, United Kingdom

**Conference Dates :** February 25-26, 2016