

FACTORS DETERMINING THE NEEDS OF SOCIAL CARE FOR THE ELDERLY IN BULGARIA

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Abstract

The provision of integrated healthcare and social assistance services facilitates the improved quality of life of senior and geriatric people. Aim of this research was to study the specifics of consuming major food groups by seniors and the factors determining the needs for social patronage in the context of the model of integrated healthcare and social assistance services for the improvement of the quality of life of the aging population.

An anonymous survey was conducted among 290 respondents between the ages of 65 - 89 from Stara Zagora Municipality, Bulgaria. The statistical processing of the empirical data was performed with a social analysis software designed for social sciences studies: SPSS (Nursis, 1986). Main statistical analyses were applied, such as dispersion analysis (MANOVA), Pearson correlational analysis, etc.

Inferences: Almost half of the studied seniors experience the need for integrated healthcare and social assistance services and social patronage in order to improve their quality of life. Seniors consume meat and fruit more rarely, vegetables more frequently, and most often - dairy products. The consumption of dairy products increases in a statistically significant way with aging, and decreases with the deterioration of the health of seniors. The intake of more dairy products correlates with an increased consumption of fruit and vegetables. There are differences in the consumption of fruit and vegetables by gender - women consume considerably more fruit, while men eat more vegetables. The factors that determine the need for social patronage services are: social context factors - social isolation, reduced physical ability for independent shopping and cooking. Increased age - factors related to the consumption of certain food groups - the feeling for a limited intake of fruit, vegetables and dairy products; the frequency in the consumption of meat and fruit is lower than three times a week.

The Model of integrated healthcare and social assistance services will have a positive impact on the health and social well-being of seniors and geriatric people, if the efforts are concentrated differentially on various groups of the aging population with respect to their needs and problems.

Key words: *Senior population, Wholesome nutrition, Social isolation, Integrated healthcare and social assistance services, Quality of life.*