IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ELDERLY:
A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract:

INTRODUCTION: The Prevailing global pandemic COVID-19 is being faced the unprecedented challenge in the world and it distorted every aspect of human life. COVID-19 results in million deaths across the globe. Various studies suggests that longer duration of lockdown measures have physical and psychological impact on each group of society, include deterioration in physical health, unapproachable health care facilities, psychological upset, stress, anxiety, depression, etc. As the changes in daily routine and restrictions in daily living activities immensely affected the lives of elderly.

METHODOLOGY: A literature search was undertaken using the Pubmed databases, CINAHL, Medline and Embase. Search terms were “Elderly, Elderly care, Challenges in COVID-19 Era, Use of digital technology, Mental health of elderly, Physical strain, COVID-19 Pandemic. A hand – search of relevant journals and significant references added to the data.

RESULT: The findings of study reveals that as the COVID-19 pandemic is spreading worldwide it is affecting the every aspect of human life. Due to growing age and physiological changes elderly people are the most vulnerable group and have higher risk of getting affected. The worldwide lockdown / restrictions are having negative impact on mental and physical health among elderly due to the challenges faced by them in their daily life.

CONCLUSION: This systematic review focused on impact of COVID-19 on elderly. It was found that lockdown restrictions are affecting negatively. So, there is a need to identify the geriatric needs and provide necessary services to them to improve their quality of life.
Keywords: Elderly, Systematic Review, COVID-19, Challenges during COVID-19 Era.

INTRODUCTION

The Prevailing global pandemic COVID-19 is being faced the unprecedented challenge in the world and it distorted every aspect of human life. COVID-19 results in million deaths across the globe. As the COVID-19 evolves, the necessary steps / preventive measures were taken to control the spread of virus and to protect the public. There was implementation of lockdown in most of the countries as a preventive measure which results in distance or isolation of human life. (1)

Various studies suggests that longer duration of lockdown measures have physical and psychological impact on each group of society, include deterioration in physical health, unapproachable health care facilities, psychological upset, stress, anxiety, depression, etc. Elderly population is one of the sufferers in this COVID-19 pandemic era. As the age grows there are physical and psychological changes in humans, which results in vulnerability among elderly population. (2)

As the changes in daily routine and restrictions in daily living activities immensely affected the lives of elderly. Social isolation results in loneliness or depression among elderly more than other groups in society, as the younger generation had used the digital devices or technologies for staying in touch or contacting their family, friends and near and dear ones. But the elder population are not well versed with the latest technologies, so, they faced more challenges to interact or be social in this COVID-19 era which put a negative impact on their mental health. The decreased social interaction and anxiety results in poor quality of life and psychological upsets among elderly population. As well as other social sectors were also affected with pandemic resulted in disturbance in daily routine which is directly associated with dissatisfaction and burden among elderly. (3)
METHODS

This study aimed to systematically review the impact of COVID-19 on elderly.

A literature search was undertaken using the Pubmed databases, CINAHL, Medline and Embase. Search terms were “Elderly, Elderly care, Challenges in COVID-19 Era, Use of digital technology, Mental health of elderly, Physical strain, COVID-19 Pandemic. A hand – search of relevant journals and significant references added to the data.

The researcher adopted the specific screening criteria to ensure the relevance of the included articles. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) quantitative, primary studies published from 2020 - 2021; (2) the study samples were restricted to elderly population (3) studies describing the impact of COVID-19 on elderly population; (4) studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic; and (5) English language publications. The exclusion criteria were as follows: (1) papers in which the background was not relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic impact on elderly; and (2) qualitative articles, or mixed method studies (3) papers not written in English, and those in which only the abstract was available.
The data were extracted from the selected studies including the characteristics of included studies were: Author, location (year), Title, Methodology & main findings. The systematic review findings are presented in narrative format.

RESULTS

A search of the selected databases yielded 98 articles, with 11 remaining after the four-stage article screening. Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of the 11 included studies, which were conducted between 2020 and 2021.

Table 1 Characteristics of studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, location (year)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Main findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gabrielle Martin, et al. (2020), Netherland</td>
<td>The Effects of COVID-19 Among the Elderly Population: A Case for Closing the Digital Divide</td>
<td>A survey was done.</td>
<td>Due to COVID-19 pandemic progression the human life is affected in all aspects. Worldwide lockdown results in drastic change in day to day routine activities. The elderly population is also affected with the worldwide changes as they are facing challenges in this era in terms of getting personal help, to interact with their family members, friends or near and dear ones which is putting a negative impact on their physical and mental health. And there is a need to take necessary actions to prevent negative impact and improve the quality of life among elderly population in COVID-19 era.(4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<td>Ipsit V, et al. (2020), Massachusetts</td>
<td>Older Adults and the Mental Health Effects of COVID-19</td>
<td>A survey was done.</td>
<td>The study reveals that elderly population had more adverse impact of pandemic on their health resulting in higher rate of mortality and morbidity. As well as isolation, and challenges with technology is exacerbating the previous mental conditions. (5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gary Cheung, et al. (2020) New Zealand</td>
<td>Impact of COVID-19 on the health and psychosocial status of vulnerable older adults: study protocol for an observational study</td>
<td>A observational study was done.</td>
<td>The study findings suggests that this rapid transition of routine among older adults have negative impact on their physical and mental health. (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debanjan Banerjee (2020), India</td>
<td>The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on elderly mental health</td>
<td>A survey was done.</td>
<td>Elderly are more vulnerable due to age related bio-physiological changes. And the various challenges in daily living activities are compromising their quality of life and resulting in poor psychological and physical health. (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samriti Pant (2020), Nepal</td>
<td>The impact of COVID-19 on elderly.</td>
<td>A survey was done.</td>
<td>The risk of severity of COVID-19 is higher among the elderly group. The restrictions are resulting in problem with their physical and mental health. As well as they had lack of source of income, low savings and facing financial burden. (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reginald D. Williams, et al. (2021), Florida</td>
<td>The impact of COVID-19 on elderly.</td>
<td>A survey was conducted in which 18,000 adults age 65 and</td>
<td>Findings suggests that older clients had economic difficulties, as well as the older adult with co-morbid illnesses had negative impact on their physical health due to</td>
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above were included. cancellation or postponed appointments with their healthcare providers. As well as their daily routine was disturbed due to cancellation of needed domestic help. The elderly population had lack of trust related to COVID-19 vaccination. (9)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stefano Amore, et al. (2021), Italy</th>
<th>Impact of COVID-19 on older adults and role of long-term care facilities during early stages of epidemic in Italy</th>
<th>A survey was done. Study findings reveals that decision-maker, and public health institutions has to identify the emerging needs of elderly as the current model of long-term care facilities is inadequate to deal with the emergency conditions such as a pandemic while home-based options may permit better containment of transmission because the elderly population is more vulnerable to get affected with COVID-19 spread. (10)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah De Pue, et al. (2021), Belgium</td>
<td>The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on wellbeing and cognitive functioning of older adults</td>
<td>A online survey was done among 65 years or older adults. Result shows that study subjects had significant decrease in activity level, poor sleep quality and wellbeing during lockdown period. Among elderly clients depression was commonly reported. (11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O’Hanlon, et al. (2021), Ireland</td>
<td>COVID-19: a call for mobilizing geriatric expertise</td>
<td>A survey was done. The needs of elder people are not identified and fulfilled due to restrictions which affected their physical and mental health negatively. So, it is necessary that geriatric needs should be identified and fulfilled with the help of a geriatrician. (12)</td>
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</table>
The findings of study reveals that as the COVID-19 pandemic is spreading worldwide it is affecting the every aspect of human life. Due to growing age and physiological changes elderly people are the most vulnerable group and have higher risk of getting affected. The worldwide lockdown / restrictions are having negative impact on mental and physical health among elderly due to the challenges faced by them in their daily life.

**DISCUSSION**

The present study focuses on impact od COVID-19 among elderly. The results reveals that due to challenges and lack of help / resources elderly people had negative impact. A similar review was conducted by Audrey Lebrasseur et al. (2021), identified the need for maintaining good physical and mental health during restrictions of activities due to lockdown. Study findings reveals that decreased social life and less in-person social interaction were associated with poor quality of life.
and increase the depression as well as accessing the services, sleep disturbances, low physical activity were reported. (15)

The findings of present study are consistent to another study conducted by Seethaler M, et al. (2021), the findings suggests that there is significant positive correlation between psychosocial impact and low social interaction. (16)

CONCLUSION

This systematic review focused on impact of COVID-19 on elderly. It was found that lockdown restrictions are affecting negatively. So, there is a need to identify the geriatric needs and provide necessary services to them to improve their quality of life.


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