

Deleterious effect of family transition, a cross-sectional study

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Citation: S. Hammami, I. Karoui, L. Sidaoui, A. Barhoumi, S. Hajem. Deleterious effect of family transition, a cross-sectional study. *Middle East Journal of Age and Ageing*, Volume 15, Issue 2, June 2018. DOI: 10.5742/MEJAA.2018.93461

ABSTRACT

Background: The most common geriatric psychiatric disorder is depression. The role of family systems in depression among the elderly has not been studied extensively. It has been suggested that urbanization promotes nucleation of family systems and a decrease in care and support for the elderly. We conducted this study in Monastir City, to determine the relationship between the type of family system and depression. We also determined the prevalence of depression in the elderly, as well as correlation of depression with other important sociodemographic variables.

Methods: A community based sample of 598 non-institutionalized elderly (age ≥ 65 years), was selected using probabilistic multistage cluster sampling. Questionnaire based interviews were conducted among the elderly people. Depression was assessed using the mini-Geriatric Depression Scale.

Results: There was a predominance of female (66 %) and mean age was 72.3 years (± 7.4). Of all the subjects, 40 % were unmarried (single, divorced, widowed or separated) at the time of study and only 11 % were educated. A large proportion (59.9%) of males were unemployed or retired. Eight percent of the subjects were living alone. Out of the 598 subjects, 22.7 % of the subjects screened positive for

depression on the mini-GDS. The elderly living in a nuclear family system were 2.5 times more likely to suffer from depression than those living in a joint family system (OR = 2.5 [95% CI = 1.3–4.5]).

Conclusion: The present study found that residing in a nuclear family system is a strong

Independent predictor of depression in the elderly. The prevalence of depression in the elderly population in our study was moderately high and a cause of concern. The transition in family systems towards nucleation may have a major deleterious effect on the physical and mental health of the elderly.