

30:306 Introduction to Gerontology

Diseases and Disorders Commonly Found in Older Adults

Karen Devereaux Melillo, PhD, APRN, BC, FAANP

Disease or Disorder

Comments

Disease

Cardiac and cerebral arteriosclerosis	Among the major causes of death, morbidity & disability in old age
Cardiac conduction defects & arrhythmias	Ventricular premature contractions usually begin: CHB and afib are common and serious in the elderly
Polymyalgia rheumatica, temporal arteritis	Two conditions may coexist; if arteritis is suspected, early intervention needed to prevent blindness
Type 2 diabetes mellitus; nonketotic hyperosmolar coma (HHNK)	HHNK virtually limited to older adults
Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)	Close monitoring for AAA = or > 3 cm. diameter
Carcinoma (breast, colon, lung, prostate, Skin)	Old age remains a major predictive factor in Ca incidence
Benign prostatic hypertrophy	Causes obstructive symptoms in 50% of men > 75
Osteoarthritis	Present in > 50% women after age 75
Osteoporosis	Present in > 75% women over 80
Parkinson's disease	A major contributor to falls & disability in old age
Diverticulosis/itis	A leading cause of GI bleeding in those >65
Myelofibrosis, multiple myeloma	Replacement of bone marrow by fibrous tissue, occurs after 50, replacement of bone marrow by multiple tumor masses, median age at onset age 60
Hypertension	Occurs in 30-60% > 65

Tuberculosis	Nursing home patients at high risk
Depression/suicide	White males greatest suicide risk > 65
Herpes zoster	Post-herpetic neuralgia in 50% > age 60

Disorders

Dementia	5% prevalence at 65-74; 40% > age 80
Delirium	Found in up to 30% hospitalized older pts.
Visual impairment (cataracts, macular degeneration, glaucoma)	Severe in 30% persons > 75
Hearing impairment	Severe in up to 30% > age 75
Malnutrition (overweight, underweight, micronutrient deficient)	Underdiagnosed in up to 50% of patients
Urinary incontinence	Often underdiagnosed; present in up to 25% of community-dwelling elderly
Falls	30% of older persons fall each year; 5% of falls result in serious injury
Pressure sores	Occur in 5% of hospitalized elderly
Disability	5% of those > age 65 and 50% of those > 85 are unable to perform = or > 1 ADL
Foot problems	Present in > 50% of older persons; contribute to falls
Hypothermia	Often develops insidiously; when severe may be underestimated with usual clinical thermometer

From: Lonergan, E.T. (1996). *Geriatrics: A Lange clinical manual*. Stamford, CT:

Appleton & Lange, p. 2.