

Review Paper

The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Elderly: A Systematic Review



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Elderly, Covid-19, Psychological problems, Social isolation, Elder abuse, Ageism

ABSTRACT

Objectives The present study aimed to review the effects of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on the elderly. In this study, we reviewed topics, such as the causes of COVID-19 severity in the elderly; the psychological problems of the elderly; the relationship between comorbidities and COVID-19 severity, and the comparison of COVID-19 with other pandemics.

Methods & Materials This systematic review study was conducted in 2020 by searching in international Internet search databases. Boolean Operator (AND, OR) was used for a combined search without a time limit. The search strategy was limited to Persian and English articles using the following keywords: "older adults, COVID-19, psychological problems, social isolation, elderly abuse, ageism". Finally, based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study, the remaining 58 studies were included in the study.

Results The results of the studies were extracted and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the elderly were examined in 8 parts, as follows: Why COVID-19 is more common in the elderly and has more complications; what are the mortality and complications of COVID-19 in the elderly; COVID-19 and underlying diseases; psychological problems caused by COVID-19 in the elderly; COVID-19 and abuse in the elderly; COVID-19 and ageism in the elderly; the comparison of COVID-19 with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and influenza epidemics in the elderly, and care for the elderly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion The COVID-19 pandemic poses serious challenges for the elderly globally. To address these challenges, everyone must work, from government officials to individuals and families. Governments should enact laws that minimize the potential age-related abuse and discrimination and provide equal opportunities for all society members, regardless of age or gender. Families should also be aware of the increasing social isolation of the elderly and keep in touch with them.

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

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his study aimed to review the effects of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

pandemic on the elderly. In this review, topics, such as the causes of COVID-19 severity in the elderly; psychological problems of the elderly; the relationship between underlying diseases and COVID-19 severity, and the comparison of COVID-19 with other pandemics were discussed.

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2. Methods and Materials

This systematic review study was conducted in 2020 by searching international databases, internet search in the Google Scholar scientific search engine and Science-Direct, Pubmed, Magiran, Cochrane Library, SID, WOS, and SCUPOS databases. We used the following keywords: “older adult, COVID-19, psychological problems, social isolation, abuse, and ageism”. Boolean Operator (AND, OR) was used for combination search without a time limit. The search strategy was limited to Persian and English articles. All search results, including titles and abstracts, were entered into Endnote. Original studies published in peer-reviewed journals were included in the current study. Articles with available full-texts were also included in this study. Letter to editor, gray literature commentaries and papers presented at seminars and conferences were excluded from this research. The Cochran checklist was used to evaluate the quality of the selected papers for experimental studies; the Greenhalgh checklist for quasi-experimental studies; the Strobe checklist for observational studies. If the checklist had all the criteria, it received a score of 2; if it covered part of the criteria, it received a score of 1, and if a study did not meet any of the criteria, it received a score of zero and was excluded from the study. PRISMA Statement has also been followed in drafting the article.

3. Results

The results of the selected studies were extracted and the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the elderly were explored in 8 parts, as follows: why COVID-19 is more common and has more complications in the elderly; mortality and complications of COVID-19 in the elderly; COVID-19 and underlying diseases; psychological problems caused by COVID-19 in the elderly; abuse in the elderly and COVID-19; COVID-19 and age discrimination in the elderly, the comparison of COVID-19 with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and influenza epidemics in the elderly, and elderly care was reviewed during COVID-19. The main results of these studies indicated that the outbreak of the COVID-19 has posed serious challenges to human life; however, one of the most critical challenges is the consequences of this disease in the elderly. The highest mortality rates, hospitalizations, hospitalizations in the intensive care unit, and complications from this disease are observed in the elderly [17]. Numerous older people stay at home for long periods, have difficulty accessing their daily needs; thus, they are exposed to social isolation, abuse, and age discrimination [18].

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic presented numerous negative consequences in the elderly. Everyone must work to control the adverse consequences of the disease in the elderly, from government officials to individuals and families. The public media, especially radio and television, can play a crucial role in informing about COVID-19. Although about a year has passed since the outbreak of this disease, there remain many hidden angles about this disease and especially its effects on the elderly. To study the effects of the COVID-19 on the elderly and prevent the occurrence of negative consequences of this disease and other new pandemics that may occur in the future, further studies are required on the effects of pandemics on the elderly and approaches to prevent and control the related adverse consequences in the elderly.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

All ethical principles are considered in this article.

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Authors' contributions

All authors were equally contributed in preparing this article.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.