

Determinants of Subjective Health of the Elderly in Healthy City Wonju, Republic of Korea

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Objectives : This study explored which factors were associated with subjective health of the elderly and whether they were different from those of younger adults in Wonju City, Republic of Korea, aiming at providing evidence for formulation of health policies for elderly health in the city.

Methods : Data was obtained from the Community Health Survey in Wonju City conducted in 2006. Trained field workers visited selected households in all areas in the city and interviewed all household members aged 19 years and over staying at home. Respondents rated their health on the day of the interview using a continuous scale from 0 to 100, which was then collapsed into 11 groups for analysis. Ordered probit model was used to regress subjective health on demographic and anthropometric factors, lifestyles (smoking, drinking, physical activity, eating regularly, and adequate sleep), social participation, morbidity (hypertension and diabetes), and disability (vision/hearing impairment, daily/social life deteriorated with decreased health status, and quality of life). All analyses were conducted separately on the elderly and younger adults for comparison.

Results : Subjective health was significantly lower in elderly persons who were male, living in lower- or higher-income households (i.e. not middle-income), had insufficient sleep, didn't participate in social activities, had daily and social life hindered with declined health status, or had problems in motor ability and anxiety/depression. Younger adults rated their health lower

with statistical significance if they were older, resided in rural areas, were not covered with

health insurance, lived with others, skipped a breakfast on the previous day, had regular exercise less frequently, had their daily and social life hampered with decreased health status, or had problems in motor ability and anxiety/depression. Factors significantly associated with subjective health only in the elderly were sex, household income, adequate sleep, and participation in social activities.

Conclusions : subjective health of the elderly in Wonju City was characterized by its association with household income, adequate sleep, and participation in social activities. Policies addressing these issues would improve health status perceived by the elderly living in the community.

Key words : Subjective health, Elderly, Wonju, Korea