

Discussion ; Direction of Elderly Nutrition in Korea

Hyung Joon Yoo[†]

Hangang Sacred Heart Hospital, Hallym University, Seoul, Korea

It is my pleasure to share ideas on elderly nutrition with you. This afternoon we met four speakers. For convenience, I will mention Dr. Jin-Sook Yoon and Dr. Cho-il Kim's presentations. Subsequently, professor Sookmie Son will talk about the other two presentations.

I believe that the two speaker's opinions are almost perfect. Therefore, I am going to emphasize only a few points. First of all, let me remind you of the characteristics of the elderly group, which are the fundamental concepts for full actions for the elderly. They are poor, ill, isolated, and depressed and experienced loss of roles. Concerning the nutritional assessment of older people by Dr. Yoon, I think meal regularity is more important and to be considered. Elderly people have various dietary habits based on their lives and experiences, especially in meal regularity. Therefore, I think meal regularity assessment might be more individually assessed.

Concerning the constitutional guideline for elderly people by Dr. Kim, I would now like to look around the socio-nutritional environment surrounding the Korean elderly. In traditional Korean society, so called Confucian doctrines, demanded the filial duty of adult children to respect and care for aging parents at home. However, the family structure and traditional

values of filial piety are changing today. In 1981, less than 20% of those aged 65 and older are living separately from their children. This number had increased to 41.7% by 1998. In spite of this change, the Korean social policy for the elderly is still insisting family-support first and public-support next. I think this is a very important point to consider about the aspects of elderly nutrition. The family-support policy is now the Korean policy for the elderly. Ageism is not only the factor in nutritional vulnerability of elderly people, but also one of the greatest values for appropriate guidelines.

To make a long story short, I think, the more social factors are considered, the better guideline will be produced. These two speakers helped me to understand better about the elderly nutrition, especially in terms of the assessment and dietary guideline for the elderly people.

There remains much more to be considered for improving the nutritional status of the elderly, including nutritional provision and the position for the Korean elderly at home and in society, so called elderly people's position in Korea. Lastly, I'd like to once again express my appreciation to the two speakers for their presentations.

[†]Corresponding author : Hyung Joon Yoo, Department of International Medicine, Hangang Sacred Heart Hospital, 94-200 Youngdungpo-dong, Youngdungpo-gu, Seoul 150-719, Korea
Tel : 02) 2639-5691, Fax : 02) 3667-6603
E-mail : yooyool@kornet.net