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Detection of dementia and its associated risk factors among elderly population in Kuching, Sarawak.

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Introduction: Prevalence of dementia is expected to increase with the rise in ageing population. Hence, screening for dementia in primary care is needed to identify dementia in its earlier stages. This study was conducted to screen elderly patients for dementia in primary care setting using the Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE).

Methods: A cross sectional study was done on a group of elderly patients aged 60 years and above attending primary health care centers, using a systematic random sampling. Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) was used to exclude patients with depression. The patients were then assessed with the MMSE for presence of dementia using the cut off score of 21.

Results: The prevalence of dementia among 300 subjects was 20.7% (CI 1.869, 6.649; P<0.001). This study showed that age, low income, no formal education, female gender, living without spouse and not on statin were associated risk factors in developing dementia. After controlling for the possible confounding factors, dementia was independently associated with age, no formal education (adjusted OR: 4.920; 95% CI: 2.347, 10.314; P<0.001), household income below median (RM825) (adjusted OR: 5.563; 95% CI: 2.259, 13.698; P<0.001) and living without spouse (adjusted OR: 2.107; 95% CI: 1.020, 4.350; P=0.044). Those above 80 years of age were eleven times more likely to develop dementia (adjusted OR: 11.280; 95% CI: 2.818, 45.148; P=0.001) and those in the 70-79 year age group were three times more likely to develop dementia (adjusted OR: 3.556; 95% CI: 1.694, 7.466; P=0.001) compared to those in the 60-69 year age group.

Conclusion: The prevalence of dementia among elderly population in Kuching, Sarawak was 20.7%. Promoting awareness on mental health is important in educating the public regarding dementia.