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Topic: Food and nutrition security

Title: Dietary Diversity Of Elderly Persons In Maseru, Lesotho

Presentation Type: Poster

Introduction: Individual dietary diversity is a qualitative tool aimed at providing a snapshot of the socioeconomic status and food security of an individual.

Aim: The aim of the study was to assess the dietary diversity of the elderly in Maseru, Lesotho

Method: A cross-sectional study was carried out among 300 community dwelling elderly people aged 65 years and above who were randomly selected from 4 constituencies in urban Maseru. A 24-hour recall of food intake was obtained from each elderly person. An individual dietary diversity score (IDDS) was calculated from an aggregate of 9 food groups based on the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) dietary diversity tool. The dietary diversity score was classified as low (≤ 3), medium (4 and 5) and high (≥ 6).

Results: 71% (n=213) of participants were female. Median age was 73.6 years with the oldest being 95 years. Most, (65.9%) had primary education with only 6.4% having tertiary education. 44.6% were receiving a pension or state grant. More than half of participants (53.7%) had a low dietary diversity, 38.3% a medium score and only 8% had a high dietary diversity. Their meals contained predominantly maize meal and bread and little protein foods. Intake of fats and oils, sweets, spices, condiments, and beverages tended to improve IDDS, without necessarily depicting healthy food choices.

Conclusion: The low dietary diversity is an indication that most of the elderly were not likely to meet their dietary requirements and were food insecure