The Health Status of the Silver Generation in Fiji

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ABSTRACT

The proportion of the population aged 55 years and over in Fiji has increased over the years as progress in social and economic conditions extends. The best possible health of the elderly population is of obvious importance to their families, the community and the nation as a whole. This paper examines the demographic, social and economic factors that determine the health status of our elderly people. The importance of this study lies in the dearth of current knowledge on the health status of elderly persons in Fiji. It will contribute to the literature on elderly issues in Fiji and the wider Pacific. Given that ageing issues do not gain much attention in Fiji’s national policies, our hope is that with ample knowledge of their health status, we can help government and other stakeholders work towards upholding the standard of living of the elderly in Fiji. The study used a structured questionnaire to interview 815 elderly in both rural and urban areas of Fiji. The application of the proportional odds model showed that marital status, ethnicity, area of residence, age and household size are significant determinants of the health status of the elderly. The poor economic status of the elderly is also an important determinant because it affects their use of health services, ability to purchase western medicine and their ability to have a healthy life in general.

Key words: ageing, economic, demographic, health status, social, social disability