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Appropriateness of medication used among the elderly in the community setting to improve medication safety

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Introduction and objectives: To assess the appropriateness of medication used among the elderly in a community setting and to identify issues related to medication safety in a community setting.

Method: The study was conducted in a selected Grama Niladhari division in the

Colombo District. Cluster sampling was used to select households. All aged ≥60 years living in each household were interviewed by two pharmacists and regular medicines used by them were recorded from health records. Potentially inappropriate medications (PIMs) were detected using the 'Screening tool of older people's prescriptions' (STOPP) and 'Screening tool to alert to right treatment' (START) criteria.

Results: Among the 246 households, data were collected only from 68 patients. The rest were excluded as some residents (N=144) were uncooperative (did not open gate or not at home), and some (N=34) did not have their health records. The most common non-communicable diseases among the interviewed patients were hypertension (61.8%) and diabetes (52.9%). There were 42 patients with at least one PIM. Of the 79 PIMs detected among the interviewed patients, 36.7% were related to STOPP, and 63.3% to START criteria. The highest number of PIMs were associated with statins (N=15) and antiplatelet drugs (N=15). Of the health records assessed, there was at least one instance of inadequate information in 24 health records.

Conclusion: PIMs were identified in the prescriptions of elderly. Although it is important to frequently assess their medications, it is a challenging task in the community due to incompleteness and unavailability of health records.