

C. Mba, L. Yarney. *Older women in Accra, Ghana: assessing their general health condition. Gerontechnology 2008; 7(2):163.* Empirical evidence from the Ghana Statistical Service¹ suggests that Ghana's ageing population has more than tripled in about 30 years (1984-2000). Unfortunately, this has occurred without a corresponding social care for the aged²⁻³. In spite of the demographic shift, older persons' concerns have remained marginal to the major social and economic debates in the country. We attempted to characterize the general health condition of older women in urban Ghana, with particular reference to the elderly women aged 50 years and over in Accra, Ghana's capital city. The data used emanate from the Accra Women's Survey of 2004. The findings broadly suggest that an overwhelming majority of them lack basic education, not in any form of paid employment, and are widowed/separated/divorced. A little over 60 percent of the women think that their general health condition is okay, while 35 percent of them believe their health condition has worsened in the last 12 months. Worsening health condition increases with age, while almost 4 out of every 5 older women have climbing limitations and have pains in their joints. Also, 53 percent of the women have malaria and 42 percent have high blood pressure. It is apparent that older women in urban Ghana are assuming a double burden of disease. They are afflicted with the usual tropical diseases such as malaria and other vector-borne illnesses, and they are now experiencing chronic illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes. As Ghana is a poor country, lifetime exposure to health problems means that many Ghanaians may enter old age already in chronic ill-health. Personal health consistently ranks alongside material security as a priority concern for the aged⁴. Indeed, physical health is for many urban elderly persons their single most important asset, bound up with their ability to work in their petty trading, to function independently and to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Illness in old age is therefore an ever-present threat.

References

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