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■ Editorial

Importance of Handgrip Strength as a Health Indicator in the Elderly

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A decline in physical function is a natural phenomenon associated with aging. However, as it is also associated with an increased risk of falls, health care use, levels of dependence, and premature death,[1] it is a major public health issue. Handgrip strength (HGS) is a commonly used measure of physical function. In recent years, there has been an increase in literature investigating the association between HGS and health outcomes. There are reports of a correlation between HGS and dyslipidemia,[2] cognitive function,[3] and diabetes. Most of the studies to date have addressed a single disease endpoint; some studies report an association between baseline HGS and mortality risk. However, there are few studies on the relationship between the degree of change in HGS and the risk of mortality. Additionally, there are no studies conducted on a Korean population.

In the present issue, Bae et al.[3] investigated the association between HGS and mortality among older adults in Korea. In particular, this study investigated the trajectories of HGS using the 2006–2016 Korean Longitudinal Study of Aging. The results of the study revealed that, compared with the highest HGS group, the adjusted hazard ratio of all-cause-mortality in the group with the lowest HGS was 3.46 (95% confidence interval [CI], 2.17–6.69) in men, and 2.69 (95% CI, 1.39–5.21) in women. In addition, the authors identified four distinct trajectory groups of HGS among men, and three among women. In both men and women, the risk of mortality was inversely proportional to the HGS.

As the risk of all-cause mortality in both men and women, increased with rapid decline in hand grip strength, it may be inferred that measuring HSG in the elderly is helpful in measuring health status.

A sedentary life style has been suggested as one of the factors related to a decline in HGS.[4] However, a clear mechanism to explain the relevance of HGS scores to these health outcomes has not been elucidated. In order to implement intervention programs, further research may be required.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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