

Differences in postural hypotension and ankle jerks in the elderly from two contrasting socio-economic levels

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Subjects in low socio-economic strata in underdeveloped countries are subjected to considerable adverse influences which may enhance age-related changes in the nervous system. We therefore assessed the presence of ankle jerks and the degree of postural hypotension in two groups, one from the upper socio-economic level (58 subjects) and the other from the lower socio-economic level (56 subjects). All subjects were over 65 years of age. Only 6% had bilateral loss of ankle jerks, with no difference between the groups. Postural hypotension of 30 mmHg or greater was more frequent in the upper socio-economic group, nine out of 58 versus two out of 56 in the lower group. We conclude that there is no relationship in the elderly between social deprivation and certain markers of neurological dysfunction, such as the absence of ankle jerks and postural hypotension. The reasons for a greater frequency of postural hypotension in the higher socioeconomic group are unclear. © 1991 Rapid Communication