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FUNCTIONAL ABILITIES IN COMMUNITY-DWELLING OLDEST-OLD: THE 90+ STUDY.

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OBJECTIVE: To report the level of dependence in Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) in non-demented community dwelling ninety year-olds.

BACKGROUND: Little is known about the functional abilities of community-residing oldest-old, the fastest growing segment of the population.

METHODS: Eighty nine men and women from the 90+ Study, a population-based investigation of individuals 90 years or older residing in Southern California. Subjects were excluded if they had a Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) score of less than 24, or were missing data on any of the relevant variables. Five ADLs (moving about indoors, bathing, eating, continence, and dressing) and five IADLs (doing finances, shopping, traveling out of the neighborhood, preparing meals, and using the telephone) were assessed by self-report from each subject. Each of the ten items was scored as: 0 (independent), 1 (difficult), 2 (needs some assistance), or 3 (dependent). Subjects were considered independent if they had scores of 0 or 1, and dependent if they had scores of 2 or 3 on an item.

RESULTS: Sixty seven percent of subjects were women. Fifty six percent lived alone, 20% had a college degree or higher, and mean age was 93.7 years (range 90 to 100). Seventy eight subjects (87.6%) were independent in all five ADLs. Of the 12.4% who needed help with ADLs, assistance was required most frequently for bathing (73%). Sixty two (69.7%) were independent in all five IADLs. Of the 30.3% who needed help on IADLs, assistance was required most frequently for shopping (85%), traveling (48%), and doing finances (37%).

CONCLUSION: Most community-residing non-demented 90+ year olds in this study were independent in all ADLs and IADLs. Dependency frequently involved activities that appeared to have a mobility or visual acuity component. Further research is needed to investigate the determinants of functional loss in the oldest-old.