ABSTRACT

**Background:** The police are the law enforcement personnel who deal with unique situations and stressors making their lifestyle vulnerable. At the time of recruitment, they are physically fit according to the requirements but as they advance in age, changes may occur. Further, there is a paucity of their dietary data. Thus, the present study was designed to assess the age related differences in lifestyle, dietary patterns and their impact on health and nutritional status.

**Methodology:** The present study was carried out on 300 male police constables in the age group of 20-60 years selected randomly from the total 709 constables in the district Jhunjhunu. They were classified into two groups based on their age 20-40 years (n=150) and 40-60 years (n=150). Pre-coded and pre-tested questionnaires were used to elicit the information on the general and other aspects. The lifestyle parameters included physical activity, occupational stress and non-food habits like alcohol, smoking/ tobacco consumption. Occupation stress level in both the groups was assessed using a validated tool (Srivastava and Singh 1984). Anthropometric assessment was done and biochemical and biophysical parameters were estimated. Dietary data was obtained using food frequency 24-hour dietary recall method. Analysis was done by statistical software SPSS 16.0 version.

**Results:** Majority of the subjects belonged to Hindu religion and those in the younger group were more educated than older group. No provision of weekly leaves was a common feature. Subjects in both groups reported daily
exercise habit with the younger group spending more time. Alcohol consumption and smoking/tobacco intake was more in older group. Average occupational stress score was slightly more in subjects belonging to group-I however the difference was not statistically significant. A majority of subjects were vegetarian. Wheat was the staple cereal and rice, bajra and corn were secondary cereals in the diet. Fruit intake was as per recommendation but intake of other vegetables was one third of the daily requirements and pulse about two third while milk (including buttermilk), fats and sugars exceeded the recommendations. Intake of fried foods, available roadside, was higher in the older group. Average anthropometric indicators like weight, BMI and WC were higher in group-II. Prevalence of overweight and central obesity was higher in group-II. Mean systolic and diastolic blood pressures were reported higher in the older group. None of the subjects was anemic. Mean serum lipid levels of subjects in group-I were lower than group-II except HDL-C which was a little higher in group-I reflecting the physical fitness. Prevalence of diabetes based on fasting blood sugar levels and that of metabolic syndrome was found to be higher in group-II.

**Conclusion:** Age related differences were observed in some of the study parameters. Physical inactivity, smoking and alcohol intake were more prevalent in the older group. Both the groups had medium to higher levels of occupational stress which shows persistent occupation-related stress over the years of services. Age was a strong risk factor for obesity, central obesity, hypertension, metabolic syndrome, dyslipidemia and diabetes mellitus while other lifestyle and dietary factors did not show such association.