

ABSTRACT

Community Participation as seen by Primary Health Care Workers in the Parish of St Catherine, Jamaica

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Primary health care workers in the parish of St Catherine were studied over a six week period (February 2nd to March 18th) to assess their knowledge, attitudes and perceptions towards community participation.

The categories of workers in the sample were doctors; nurses; community health aides; dental staff; public health inspectors; pharmacist; others; comprising, contact investigators, orderlies, nutritionist, and laboratory technicians.

A questionnaire instrument was administered among 13 health centres in zones 2 and 3 for a total of 80 workers. The majority of workers were female (85%), and the significant age distribution was between 20 years and 49 years.

While most of the workers said they heard of community participation only 54% described their understanding of the concept as clear. There was a clearer understanding of the

concept among Community Health Aides (CHA's) as compared to nurses. Overall the attitude of the workers towards community participation was high (66%).

Most workers felt that health workers and communities should share decision-making, but only 54% of the workers studied thought that they had the skills needed for community participation.

It is evident that there is potential for participation, but primary health care workers need the tools and the necessary skills to be effective in carrying out the bridging role between the health services and the community.

There is need for training in community participation for both health workers and community members; implementation of policy decision for community participation in primary health care; better utilization of the expertise of workers who have some training in community participation and more care in the choice of workers so that they work in the areas in which they live.